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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Govt revokes order to preload cyber app amid outcry

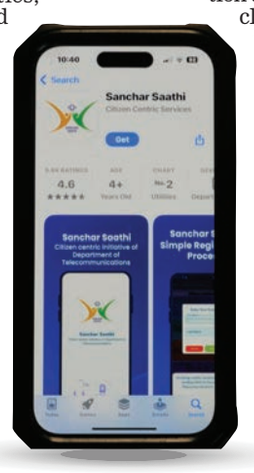
Says snooping isn't possible in Sanchar Saathi

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

- Opposition parties, privacy groups and some smartphone makers, including Apple and Samsung, had objected to the 28 November order.

The government on Wednesday withdrew its directive requiring smartphone manufacturers to pre-install the state-run Sanchar Saathi cybersecurity app on all new devices, amid mounting concerns that the mandate could undermine user privacy or enable surveillance. The app will remain available for voluntary download on app stores.

Opposition parties, privacy groups and some smartphone makers, including Apple and Samsung, had objected to the 28 November order, arguing that the app could potentially access calls and messages. The Ministry of Communications defended the app, saying it merely helps track and block stolen phones and that user registrations had surged, with six lakh sign-ups in a single day.



Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia told Parliament that "snooping is not possible and will not happen" through the app. He repeated that the app is operational only after user registration and can be deleted, a claim challenged by the Congress, which cited a clause in the withdrawn directive stating pre-installed apps "cannot be removed" or have their functionalities restricted. Congress leader Pawan Khera accused the government of "brazen snooping".

Globally, few countries mandate pre-loading of cybersecurity apps; Russia is cited as the only known example, having ordered compulsory installation of MAX, a state-backed messaging service, on all devices in August.

In its explainer, the ministry said Sanchar Saathi seeks limited permissions: to verify active SIMs, send a one-time SMS for registration, access the camera to scan IMEI details, and upload screenshots of fraudulent calls or messages. It emphasised that the app does not access contacts, location, microphone, Bluetooth, or other private data without explicit user consent.

In Mumbai, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray likened the app to Pegasus spyware, accusing the BJP-led government of trying to "spy on the people who voted it to power". Addressing party workers at his residence, he said, "They have changed the name of Pegasus to Sanchar Saathi. They are spying instead of focusing on governance." —*PTI*

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Karnataka Raj Bhavan renamed as Lok Bhavan

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Raj Bhavan, Karnataka will henceforth be known as 'Lok Bhavan, Karnataka', Governor's secretariate said on Wednesday. A notification issued by the Governor's secretariat said, the change will come into effect immediately, following the approval of Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot. Heads of all the Departments of State Government have been instructed to refer the "Raj Bhavan Karnataka" as "Lok Bhavan Karnataka" in all future correspondence.—*PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Rupee breaches 90/dollar for the first time

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

The rupee breached the 90-a-dollar level for the first time to settle at a fresh all-time low of 90.15 on Wednesday, down 19 paise from its previous close, amid sustained foreign fund outflows and higher crude oil prices. Uncertainty over the India-US trade deal, along with the lack of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) effort to stop the slide in the local unit, put further pressure on the rupee, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 89.96 against the US dollar and fell to a record intraday low of 90.30 during the session before closing at a new all-time low of 90.15, down 19 paise from its previous close.—*PTI*

Govt lawyer hacked to death in Tamil Nadu

TENKASI, 3 DEC

A 45 year-old government lawyer was hacked to death in this district on Wednesday in a suspected case of land dispute, police said. The victim, Muthukumarasamy, was attacked by a two-wheeler borne man with a sharp-edged weapon outside the former's office in this town. The man was declared brought dead at a near by hospital. Police suspect that a land dispute could have led to the killing and have launched a probe into the matter. —*PTI*

Pharmacies told to display QR to report drug reactions

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has directed all state and Union Territory drug licensing authorities to ensure that retail and wholesale pharmacies prominently display a designated QR code and toll-free number for reporting adverse drug reactions. The move aims to streamline public and healthcare-professional reporting through the PvPI Adverse Drug Reaction Monitoring System. The decision, taken at the Pharmacovigilance Programme of India's 16th Working Group Meeting, requires pharmacies to display the QR code along with the toll-free number 1800-180-3024. Authorities must ensure immediate implementation. —*PTI*

HC bins Prajwal's plea to suspend lifer in rape case

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

The Karnataka High Court rejected an application filed by convicted former MP Prajwal Revanna, seeking suspension of the life sentence imposed on him in the first rape case registered at the Holenarasipura Rural Police Station of Hassan District.

A division bench of Justice KS Mudagal and Justice Venkatesh Naik T. said, "Weighing the material on record, the gravity of the offence, and considering the effect on other pending cases against the appellant, this court's opinion is that this is not a fit case for granting suspension of sentence and bail."

The bench noted that multiple cases have been filed against the appellant, accusing him of sexual abuse.

Records showed that the victim had not mustered the courage to report the incident to the police due to the political and financial clout of the appellant. —*PTI*

AHEAD OF PUTIN'S VISIT

Russian Cabinet approves deeper nuke ties with India

NEW DELHI, 3 NOV

Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit India on 4–5 December for the 23rd India–Russia annual summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his first trip to the country since the start of the Ukraine conflict in 2022. The visit, marking 25 years of the India–Russia strategic partnership, is expected to deliver major agreements across defence, nuclear energy, trade and technology.

Ahead of the summit, the Russian cabinet approved the signing of an MoU to deepen civil nuclear cooperation. Rosatom, which is building reactors at the Kudankulam plant, has been authorised to sign the pact and will present proposals including collaboration on small modular reactors and localisation of advanced Russian designs.

Defence ties will form a key pillar of the visit. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will meet his Russian counterpart Andrey Belousov on Thursday to push for timely supply of military hardware, including spares. India is considering additional S-400 missile systems after their reported success during Operation Sindoor, and may also explore future procurement of the S-500. The possibility of Russia supplying Su-57 fighter jets is also expected to feature in discussions.

According to reports, Putin will arrive on the evening of 4 December for a private dinner hosted by = Modi. On 5 December, he will receive a ceremonial welcome at Rashtrapati Bhavan, visit Rajghat, and hold summit talks with Modi at Hyderabad House, where multiple agreements and a joint statement are expected.

Both leaders will then address the India–Russia Business Forum at Bharat Mandapam before President Droupadi Murmu hosts a state banquet. Russia Today is also set to launch its India operations during the visit. —*PTI*

Parliament paralysis ends as LS, RS function smoothly

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Parliament on Wednesday saw a return to normal proceedings, with the Lok Sabha conducting its first uninterrupted Question Hour of the Winter Session after a resolution of the opposition's demand for a debate on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The House will now hold a discussion on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram on Monday and on electoral reforms on Tuesday, following decisions taken at an all-party meeting chaired by Speaker Om Birla.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman assured the Lok Sabha that the proposed excise levy on tobacco products, introduced through the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, would simply maintain the current tax burden after the GST overhaul, not add to it. The Bill was later passed by voice vote. She reiterated that revenues collected would be shared with states as under existing mechanisms. Across Parliament, the Rajya Sabha's Business Advisory Committee agreed to hold 10-hour debates next week on Vande Mataram and on electoral reforms once the Lok Sabha completes its discussion. This signalled an easing of the deadlock that has stalled both Houses since Monday.

LS will hold a discussion on Vande Mataram on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Meanwhile, a debate in the Rajya Sabha on extending the Water Pollution Amendment Act, 2024, to Manipur—currently under President's Rule—triggered a fierce political confrontation. Opposition members criticised the prolonged suspension of the Manipur Assembly and called for immediate elections, arguing that Parliament should not be performing the role of the state legislature. BJP members countered that the Centre had worked extensively to restore order and strengthen environmental regulation, citing prolonged ministerial presence in the state. —*PTI*

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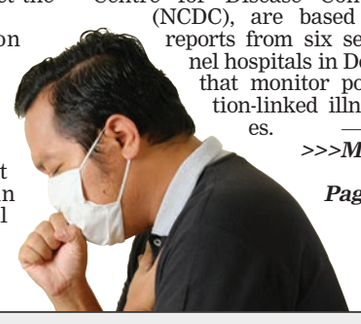
Since 2022, Delhi sees 2L respiratory cases amid smog

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Around 2 lakh cases of acute respiratory illness (ARI) were reported in Delhi between 2022 and 2024, according to new Central data, highlighting the severe health impact of the Capital's toxic air. India's biggest cities continue to struggle with hazardous pollution levels, and the effects are visible in emergency rooms, where hospitals have recorded thousands of ARI-related admissions in recent years.

Responding to a question in the Rajya Sabha, the Union Ministry of Health described air pollution as a major "triggering factor" for respiratory disease. The data was made public after MP Dr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney sought details on rising cases.Minister Prataprao Jadhav said the government is tracking the situation through an integrated disease surveillance system. The figures, sourced from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), are based on reports from six sentinel hospitals in Delhi that monitor pollution-linked illnesses. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 4*



Belagavi girl returning home raped by two men

BELAGAVI, 3 DEC

A class seven student was allegedly sexually assaulted by two men while she was returning home from a flour mill in this district, police said on Wednesday.

The suspects, Manikanth Dinnimani and Iranna Sankammanavar, were arrested on Tuesday in connection with the incident, they said.

Police said that on 21 November, the suspects allegedly dragged the girl into a sugarcane field while she was returning home from a flour mill near her house, and raped her.

The victim filed a complaint on Monday, and a POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act case was registered at the Murgod police station here.

In her complaint, the girl alleged that Dinnimani sexually assaulted her while Sankammanavar assisted him.

Belagavi Superintendent of Police Bhimashankar Guled said that both suspects were taken into custody for questioning. —*PTI*

Mob tries to barge into Srirangapatna mosque

SRIRANGAPATNA, 3 DEC

- Hindu groups claim that a Anjaneya (Hanuman) temple was destroyed during Tipu Sultan's reign. They say that the Jamia Masjid, built in 1786, was constructed over the temple

Hanuman Mala devotees attempted to storm the Jamia Masjid in Srirangapatna in Mandya district during the Hanuman Jayanthi celebrations on Wednesday. Security has been beefed up in and around the mosque.

Hundreds of people from various districts and neighbouring states came to participate in the yatra organised by the Hindu Jagran Vedike (HJV) and other organisations.

When the procession reached the mosque, several people tried to storm the building, while others stayed on the road. Police managed to bring the situation under control and there were no additional reports of violence at the time of publishing.

The yatra is a sensitive issue as the HJV has claiming that a Anjaneya (Hanuman) temple in the town was destroyed during Tipu Sultan's reign. They claim that the Jamia Masjid, built in 1786, was constructed over the temple. The HJV wants to reconstruct the temple.

A similar situation occurred in 2022 when the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) gave a call to perform pooja inside the mosque.

District Superintendent of Police Mallikarjun Baladandi said additional police personnel would be deployed. —*Salar*

42 FLIGHTS DISRUPTED IN B'LURU

100 flights cancelled as IndiGo grapples with crew woes

MUMBAI/ NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

IndiGo cancelled more than 100 flights and delayed scores of others on Wednesday as the country's largest airline struggled with major operational disruptions, largely stemming from crew shortages. The carrier announced "calibrated schedule adjustments" for the next 48 hours to stabilise operations.

IndiGo operates more than 2,200 daily flights, but government data showed its on-time performance plunging to 35 per cent on Tuesday, a dramatic fall for an airline long associated with punctuality, implying over 1,400 delayed services. Airports across major cities saw chaotic scenes as passengers confronted staff over extended delays and cancellations.

PHOTO: X

The airline cited "a multitude of unforeseen operational challenges" over the past two days, including minor technology glitches, winter-related schedule changes, adverse weather, increased congestion in the aviation system, and the implementation of updated Flight Duty Time Limitations norms. These rules mandate longer weekly rest periods, extended night hours and a cap of two-night landings, down from six previously. Cancellations were reported across 42 in Bengaluru, 38 in Delhi, 33 in Mumbai and 19 in Hyderabad. IndiGo did not specify how many flights would be affected in the future. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 2*

Microsoft glitch hits check-in systems

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Check-in systems at various airports faced issues on Wednesday morning due to a system outage, according to a source. The source added that some flights have been delayed due to the issues.

"Microsoft Windows reports major service outages globally. IT services/ check in systems at airports are impacted," as per a message for the passengers at the Varanasi airport.

According to the message, airlines have implemented manual check in and boarding procedures. At least four airlines -- IndiGo, SpiceJet, Akasa Air and Air India Express -- have been affected. —*PTI*

SC to review its verdict on City's ISKCON temple

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a petition from ISKCON India seeking a review of its 16 May ruling, which asserted that the Hare Krishna temple in Bengaluru belongs to the City's faction of ISKCON. A bench comprising Justices MM Sundresh, Prashant Kumar Mishra, and Satish Chandra Sharma issued notice to the Bengaluru faction and other parties involved in the dispute. The apex court's May ruling overturned a 2011 Karnataka High Court decision that had granted temple control to ISKCON Mumbai. The ongoing legal tussle between the Mumbai and Bengaluru factions dates back over 25 years. Notably, Justice JK Maheshwari has indicated an interest in the review, while Justice AG Masih dismissed the petitions, citing a lack of apparent error in the previous judgment. *—PTI*

PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Two arrested in City with drugs worth Rs 28.75 cr

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Two foreign nationals have been arrested in Bengaluru, and police have seized over 10kg of MDMA crystal and 8kg of hydro ganja, valued at approximately Rs 28.75 crore. A female foreign national was apprehended for allegedly storing and selling MDMA from her residence in Sampigehalli, with 9kg of MDMA, worth Rs 18.50 crore, confiscated. Meanwhile, another foreign national was arrested in Siddapura with 1kg of MDMA worth Rs 2.25 crore. Additionally, authorities seized eight kg of hydro ganja from parcels at the Foreign Post Office. Meanwhile, customs officials at KIA apprehended a passenger from Malaysia for allegedly smuggling hydroponic cannabis valued at Rs 1.71 crore. *—PTI*

GI Mahotsav 3.0 to celebrate cultural heritage in Mysuru

MYSURU, 3 DEC

Mysuru is set to host the GI Mahotsav 3.0 from 5 to 8 December at the CSIR-Central Food Technological Research Institute (CSIR-CFTRI). This event aims to boost market visibility for Geographical Indication (GI) communities and empower artisans, producers, and rural entrepreneurs. Dr Giridhar Parvatam stated, "Mahotsav 3.0 aims to promote sustainable livelihoods linked to traditional skills and foster innovation." The inaugural ceremony will feature an MoU signing between MABIF and CSIR-CFTRI, along with the launch of new startup products. Attendees can look forward to daily technical sessions, cultural programmes, and nearly 50 stalls showcasing authentic GI products from South India. *—Salar News*

4 die as car crashes into parked tractor in Bagalkot

BAGALKOT, 3 DEC

Four young men tragically lost their lives in the early hours of Wednesday when their car collided with a stationary tractor laden with sugarcane in Jamakhandi taluk, Bagalkot district in the State. The tractor was parked outside a sugar mill in Siddapura, awaiting unloading. The victims were Vishwanath, 17; Praveen, 22; Ganesh, 20; and Prajwal, 17; all residents of Siddapura village. The accident occurred as they were heading to the Shirol Kadasiddheshwara Devara fair late at night. According to police, the car was travelling at high speed and crashed into the rear of the tractor. Sources say that the occupants were under the influence of alcohol at the time. *—Salar News*

Won't go to Delhi without invite, says CM

DKS flies to Delhi for 'private' event; CM meets Venugoppal but says no political talks

MANGALURU, 3 DEC

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said he would not travel to New Delhi unless he is formally invited, while Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar flew to the capital to attend a wedding and to plan for a party event.

The two leaders recently displayed bonhomie by hosting breakfast for each other at their residences in Bengaluru to quell speculation about leadership change.

While the Deputy CM flew to Delhi, Siddaramaiah reached Mangaluru to take part in an event to commemorate centenary of social reformer Sri Narayana Guru's meeting with Mahatma Gandhi.

AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal delivered the keynote address at the event and subsequently had a lunch meeting with the CM.

CM Siddaramaiah and AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal **PHOTO: X**

Before heading to Kaveri Guest House, Siddaramaiah told media that he did not discuss politics with the AICC General Secretary.

When reporters pointed out that Shivakumar was going to Delhi, he replied, "Let him go. Has anyone said no to him?"

Asked if he would go, he said, "I will go only when I am invited. I was not invited, so I am not going."

He added that if there is any direction from the party High Command for a meeting in Delhi, it would be conveyed through Venugopal.

Before his departure, Shivakumar said he was travelling to Delhi to attend a marriage.

He also mentioned plans for a discussion at the Congress headquarters regarding a grand event on 14 December in Delhi's Ramleela Maidan on 'Vote Chori' campaign.

"On December 14, a Vote Chori event is happening in Delhi. So we are taking at least 300 workers from each district to Delhi. We have to take part in large numbers. I have told the district units to make arrangements to take them to Delhi," Shivakumar told media before flying to Delhi.

Regarding Siddaramaiah's meeting with Venugopal, Shivakumar questioned, "What's wrong in CM meeting Venugopal, Rahul Gandhi or Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge?" *—PTI*

DIFFERENCES ARE RESOLVED, SAYS PARMESHWARA

Home Minister G Parmeshwara on Wednesday said he does not wish to comment further on recent political differences, stating that "whatever little difference was there, if it was there, has been resolved". On the Chief Minister's remark that "politics is not permanent," Dr. Parameshwar added, "That is something everyone already knows."

DKS SAYS HIS WATCH COST RS 24 LAKHS

Shivakumar addressed the watch controversy, saying that he had bought the watch seven years ago in Australia and paid Rs 24 lakh for with his official credit card for it. "I have declared it in my election affidavit," he told press. During the breakfast meeting on Tuesday, both Shivakumar and the CM wore luxury watches, which the BJP and JD(S) alleged cost Rs 43 lakh.

SUPPORTERS GREET VENUGOPAL WITH PRO-DKS CHANTS IN M'LURU

MANGALURU, 3 DEC

AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal was greeted with pro-Shivakumar slogans at the Mangaluru airport while the Chief Minister's supporters hit back later with "full term CM Siddaramaiah," chants.

Venugopal arrived to attend the centenary commemoration of the historic Narayana Guru-Mahatma Gandhi dialogue, an event organised by Mangaluru University and attended by Siddaramaiah, Cabinet Ministers and senior Congress leaders.

Sources close to Shivakumar said he was not invited to the event.

As Venugopal exited the airport, a group of party workers raised slogans expressing support for Shivakumar.

Later, when the CM landed at the airport, his supporters raised slogans like 'Siddu, Siddu, Poornaavadhi Siddu' (full term CM Siddaramaiah).

When asked about the sloganeering, Shivakumar said, "What is wrong in it?"

"People have been raising slogans 'DK DK' for the past ten years. There is nothing new in it. Some people shout 'Modi Modi' and some others say 'DK DK'. There are people who shout 'Rahul Rahul' and some others chant 'Siddu Siddu'. There is nothing wrong in it. With their love and affection, they raise slogans. We should take it in a sportive way." *—PTI*

MUSLIM MUTTAHIDA MAHAZ TALKS

Members of Karnataka Muslim Muttahida Mahaz met with AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan on Wednesday to discuss issues related to the community. The talks focused on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) among other important topics. Chief Imam of the City's Jamia Masjid Maulana Maqsood Imran Rashadi, President Jamiyat Ulema Karnataka Mufti Iftikhar Ahmed Qasmi and others attended the meeting **PHOTO: SALAR**

Four cops suspended for Dalit man's custodial death

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Four policemen have been suspended in connection with the death of a Dalit man, 22, at a rehabilitation centre near here, days after he was allegedly tortured in police custody, an official said on Wednesday.

Darshan PG, a resident of Viveknagar here, died on 26 November. An inspector, a constable and two officials of the Viveknagar police station were suspended on Tuesday.

"The case is now being investigated by the CID," the senior police officer said.

The deceased's mother said in her complaint that her son Darshan, was detained by the police on 12 November for allegedly creating public nuisance after consuming alcohol.

- The deceased's mother said that police told her on that her son died due to respiratory problems, but there were torture marks on his body. The case has been transfered to CID

On 16 November, he was sent to a rehabilitation centre on the outskirts of Bengaluru as per his mother's request, another senior police officer said.

"She alleged that police took Rs 7,500 for admission and transferred Darshan directly to the rehabilitation centre. However, she was not allowed to speak or meet her son. The authorities said he was fine, the mother alleged in her complaint," he said.

On 26 November, she said that she was informed that her son had died due to respiratory problems, but there were torture marks on his body. She said she suspected that he was tortured by the police, leading to his death later at the rehabilitation centre, he added. *—PTI*

Passengers wait for hours at KIA amid Indigo delay

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Passengers had a harrowing time at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru on Wednesday as Indigo cancelled multiple flights.

Sources said the airline cancelled 42 flights, both scheduled arrivals and departures, from and to the Bengaluru airport, with the airlines saying that the disruptions were due to a combinations of reasons including technical glitches, adverse weather conditions and updated crew rostering rules.

While some passengers were lucky to get a flight to their destination after hours of wait, others were not. They were stuck at the airport.

Passengers based out in the City went home while others had to wait at the airport.

Sources said the scene at the airport was no different from a Railway platform, people sat wherever they found place.

Travel agent Sudhir Pokarna said there were no arrangements for food and water for the passengers, whose flights were cancelled. He said many passengers went home after six to seven hours of wait.

Indigo apologised for the disruption and offered passengers alternative travel arrangements to reach their destinations or refunds, as applicable. *—PTI*

Ranveer booked for mocking 'Kantara'

An advocate has filed a complaint against Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh, accusing him of hurting religious sentiments by mocking the sacred 'Daiva' (Bhoota Kola) tradition depicted in the film 'Kantara', police said on Wednesday. No FIR has been registered yet, a senior officer at High Grounds police station confirmed.

The complaint by advocate Prashanth Methal says Singh insulted the sacred Daiva tradition during the presentation in film award ceremony. *—PTI*

2yrs to build 1 pillar? Minister reprimands Metro officials

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Revenue Minister Krishna Byregowda pulled up BMRCL officials over the slow pace of construction for the Metro's Blue Line. He scolded senior officials, including BMRCL Managing Director Ravishankar and Bengaluru North Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar for taking two years to build one pillar.

During the inspection at Manyata Tech Park Byregowda said that officials had barricaded large portions of the road but there hadn't been any significant progress in construction.

"Why are you occupying the space," he scolds officials. "When for two years you can't finish one pillar?"

Among other directives, he ordered officials to clear debris from construction sites, directed the BRCL to expedite construction, flagged long-pending Metro work at Kodigehalli and told officials not to obstruct traffic and ordered a joint intensive cleaning drive from Hebbal to Bagaluru Cross.

Revenue Minister during an inspection of the Blue Line construction on Wednesday **PHOTO: X**

The Blue Line Metro is set to open in December 2027 after long delays. Phase 2A runs from Central Silk Board to KR Pura, and Phase 2B, which extends from KR Pura to Kempegowda International Airport (KIA). *—Salar News*

Stop toll collection on 'unscientific' Bidar NH: MLA

BIDAR, 3 DEC

The construction work on the Kamalnagar–Bidar National Highway (NH-50) is unscientific and still incomplete, yet preparations are already being made to start toll collection, said Aurad (B) MLA Prabhu B Chavan. This must be stopped immediately, the former minister said.

"The construction work, costing Rs 257 crore, was executed by Patel Infrastructure Pvt Ltd of Gujarat, and there have been numerous complaints about the work," he said.

The road is filled with depressions, potholes, and large cracks throughout, he alleged. Despite continuous repair works, there has been no improvement, he alleged. When one stretch is repaired, cracks appear in another.

"The Public Works Minister inspected the road and admitted that the construction is poor. Yet, no action has been taken," Chavan said. He said toll can only be collected if the road is in proper condition. But since the road is incomplete, toll collection should be stopped. *—Salar News*

FOR COMPLAINT AGAINST PROF

PhD scholar attempts suicide as degree withheld

BELAGAVI, 3 DEC

A 34-year-old PhD scholar from Rani Channamma University (RCU), Belagavi, who allegedly attempted suicide after being denied her doctoral certificate at the recent convocation, has said she will approach Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot — the Chancellor of the university — seeking justice.

Currently undergoing treatment at the government hospital in Chikkodi, the scholar released a video message claiming that although the Governor had approved her name for the convocation, the university ignored his directions and withheld her certificate.

She alleged that the action followed her complaint against her research guide, Prof KLN Murthy, where she accused him of harassment. Registrar Kamagouda instructed officials to stop the certificate after her guide was suspended by the Syndicate, she said.

"It was only because I raised a complaint…. Ever since the suspension, I have been singled out" she said. "I will send all documents to the Governor seeking intervention."

She also alleged that the Registrar was favouring candidates from his own caste for teaching posts and that she was targeted for opposing this.

Her family said she consumed an excessive number of sleeping pills after returning home from the convocation last week, citing humiliation, mental agony and institutional negligence. She was admitted to BIMS Hospital in Belagavi and later shifted to Chikkodi hospital.

Her husband blamed the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar. "We have two children. If anything happens to my wife, I will end my life on the university campus."

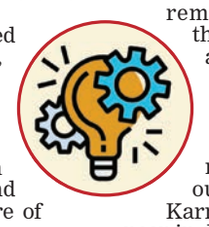
RCU denied any wrongdoing. Kamagouda said the scholar joined the PhD programme in November 2021, submitted her thesis 'A Comprehensive Historical Study of Raibag Region (From Earliest Period to AD 1800)' on 18 March, 2025, completed her viva voce on 10 May, 2025, and her PhD notification was issued the same day. RCU said her certificate was withheld pending an inquiry into her allegations, saying the process is "fair." *—Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

State govt signs 2 MoUs for innovation hub status

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

The Karnataka government has signed two pivotal Memoranda of Understanding aimed at establishing the State as India's premier innovation hub and a global centre for deep-tech.



The first MoU, inked with Coinbase India, a digital asset exchange platform, seeks to bolster Karnataka's reputation as an on-chain innovation capital and a cybersecurity centre of excellence.

Under the agreement, collaboration will focus on strengthening the blockchain ecosystem through developer education, startup incubation, and public awareness initiatives.

The second MoU, with Refroid Technologies, introduces a cutting-edge, energy-efficient liquid-cooling portfolio tailored for next-generation AI and hyperscale workloads, aligning with India's ambition to "innovate for the world".

IT Minister Priyank Kharge remarked, "Through these partnerships, we aim to unlock new economic opportunities for our youth, build strong technical capability, and move rapidly toward our vision of making Karnataka a global pioneer in digital innovation."

Manjula N, Secretary of the Department of Electronics, Information Technology, Biotechnology, and Science and Technology, added that these initiatives would "catapult the state into a new realm of deep-tech economy and development." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

BJP won't win Nemom Assembly again: Sivankutty

T'PURAM, 3 DEC

Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty has confidently stated that the BJP will struggle to reclaim the Nemom assembly constituency, asserting that "the BJP account has been closed in a way that cannot be opened anymore." His comments follow the BJP state president, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, announcing his candidacy for the upcoming assembly polls. Nemom is historically significant for the BJP, as it is the only assembly seat the party has ever won in Kerala, with veteran leader O Rajagopal achieving victory in 2016. However, the BJP was defeated in the 2021 elections by Sivankutty, and the minister believes that "it will be difficult for them to open it again," emphasising the party's dwindling prospects in the constituency. —*PTI*

Cong leader urges for 'Brahmastra' on Mamkootathil

T'PURAM, 3 DEC

Senior Congress leader K Muraleedharan has called for strong action against suspended MLA Rahul Mamkootathil, who faces fresh sexual assault allegations from another woman. Muraleedharan said the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief Sunny Joseph should take swift measures, remarking that "it is time to use the Brahmastra". He added that Mamkootathil must decide whether to resign as MLA and that the party had suspended him before any written complaint was filed. With written complaints now before the party and police, he said stricter action will follow. KPCC chief Joseph and senior leader Ramesh Chennithala said further steps will depend on the anticipatory bail order. Mamkootathil remains absconding. —*PTI*

WhatsApp varsity story: Cong on 'Nehru-Babri' row

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The Congress on Wednesday rejected Defense Minister Rajnath Singh's claim that Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to rebuild the Babri Masjid using public funds, calling it a "lie" and a "WhatsApp university story". Singh, speaking in Vadodara, said Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel prevented Nehru's plan from succeeding. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said such remarks aim to distract from real issues. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera demanded evidence, noting Patel died in 1950 and Nehru governed for 14 more years. He urged Singh not to follow PM Narendra Modi's "divisive path". Congress MPs Manickam Tagore, Manish Tewari, Imran Masood and Tariq Anwar criticised Singh for spreading misinformation. —*PTI*

5 Naxalites, 1 cop killed in Chh'garh's encounter

BIJAPUR, 3 DEC

Five Naxalites and a jawan of the police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) were killed in an encounter in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Wednesday, officials said. Another jawan suffered injuries in the encounter, they said, adding that the operation was still underway. The encounter took place in a forest in Gangaloor adjoining Dantewada district when a security team was on an anti-Naxal operation, a police official said. Personnel belonging to the DRG and Special Task Force, both units of the state police, and CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) were involved in the operation, he said. So far, the bodies of five Naxalites have been recovered from the spot, the official said. —*PTI*

Tobacco may get costly as LS passes Bill

FM says excise duty is not tax, revenue to be shared with states

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Excise duty sought to be levied on tobacco and its products through a new Bill will ensure that tax incidence on demerit items does not fall after the recent GST overhaul, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, vowing to share revenues collected with states.

Replying to the debate on the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said this is not an additional tax, and the tax burden, as currently applicable under the GST regime, will continue.

The Lok Sabha later passed the Bill with a voice vote.

The provisions of the Bill will come into effect once the GST compensation cess, which is currently levied on tobacco, comes to an end. The cess will cease to exist after the Rs 2.69 lakh crore loan taken to compensate states for revenue loss during Covid is repaid, which is likely to happen in the next couple of weeks.

The Centre's tax revenues form part of the divisible pool, of which 41 per cent was shared among states.

She said that before GST, tax rates of tobacco were increased every year, so that high prices act as a deterrent to the consumption of the demerit good. After the sunset of compensation cess, the government is bringing back the excise duty, which existed prior to GST.

Sitharaman also clarified that there is no change in the tax incidence on beedi even after the levy of the excise duty.

Additionally, terming fake news as a threat to democracy, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday that there is a need for strict action against those who create AI-generated deep fake videos and spread false information.

He also informed the House that the government is working on framing new rules for curbing fake news and AI-generated deep fake videos and strengthening the institutional mechanisms. —*PTI*

Several Opposition MPs, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, protested on Wednesday against the new labour codes in Parliament House complex and demanded their scrapping PHOTO: PTI

Renuka's 'Bhow Bhow' remarks sparks row

Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury's light-hearted "Bhow Bhow" remark to the media regarding a privilege motion against her for bringing a dog to Parliament has ignited a row. "What else should I say?" she quipped, promising a strong response if needed. BJP's Shehzaad Poonawala labelled Chowdhury a "serial offender," asserting her actions insulted Parliament's dignity. She defended her actions, stating, "Which law says that I can't rescue a dog?" Rahul Gandhi supported her. —*PTI*

RS erupts over renaming of Raj Bhavans

During Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, AITC MP Dola Sen questioned the Home Ministry's 25 November directive to rename all Raj Bhavans as Lok Bhavans, noting that neither Parliament nor state assemblies had been consulted. Leader of the House JP Nadda objected to it, while Opposition Leader Mallikarjun Kharge accused government of stifling debate & undermining parliamentary democracy. —*PTI*

Govt evasive on caste census, says Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the Modi government of betraying Bahujans by offering no clear framework, timeline, parliamentary debate or public dialogue on a caste census. His remarks followed the government's response to his Lok Sabha questions on census planning and caste enumeration. Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said 2027 Census will be held in two phases, beginning with house listing in 2026. —*PTI*

All India Forward Bloc members celebrate after Mohd. Imran wins from Chandni Mahal in MCD bye-election, in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

BJP bags 7 seats in MCD, AAP 3 & Cong 1

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

In the recently concluded Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) bypolls, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured victory in seven out of 12 wards, while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won three, and the Congress made its mark by clinching one ward. The All India Forward Bloc also opened its account with a win in Chandni Mahal.

The electoral contest, held on 30 November, marked the first significant election in Delhi since February's Assembly polls. Although the BJP previously held nine of the wards, it suffered setbacks, losing Mundka, Naraina, and Dakshinpuri to the AAP. The Congress's Suresh Choudhary defeated the BJP's Subhajeet Gautam in Sangam Vihar A, marking the party's return to representation in the municipal body.

BJP's Delhi chief, Virendra Sachdeva, described the results as a "clear message from the mandate," with the party achieving a vote share of 45.09 per cent .

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal remarked that the outcome illustrates restoring public trust in his party.

The vote percentage for the bypolls stood at 38.51 per cent, significantly lower than the 50.47 per cent in the previous 2022 elections. —*PTI*

67.63% voter turnout recorded in M'rashtra local polls

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

A voter turnout of 67.63 per cent was recorded in the first phase of elections to 263 municipal councils and nagar panchayats in Maharashtra, while the president and councillors of a local governing body in Dhule district were elected unopposed, officials said on Wednesday.

The elections were held on Tuesday between 7.30am and 5.30pm. The State Election Commission (SEC) had provided the data of voter turnout recorded till 3.30 pm (on Tuesday), but could not give the final figure till late night.

On Wednesday, the SEC provided the final turnout figure of 67.63 per cent.

As the president and councillors of the Dondaicha-Warwade Municipal Council in Dhule district of north Maharashtra were elected unopposed, polling was not held there, it said. In the elections, ruling alliance partners BJP, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP contested against each other at some places. Elections to 24 other local bodies to elect the municipal presidents and members and 154 members in 76 local bodies will be held on 20 December. Counting of votes will be on 21 Dec. —*PTI*

DON STOPPED DANGEROUS INDIA-PAK CLASH: RUBIO

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 3 DEC

President Donald Trump has brokered many peace deals, including "very dangerous ones like the one between India and Pakistan," and deserves "tremendous credit" for reshaping America's foreign policy, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said. During a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Rubio said for the first time in decades American foreign policy is guided solely by whether it made the US "safer."

New Delhi has consistently denied any third-party intervention. The Congress took a swipe, saying "no wonder the Modi-Trump huglomacy is in deep freeze." —*PTI*

Countries blocking talent flow will be losers: EAM

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, asserted on Wednesday that nations imposing excessive barriers to the flow of talent across borders will ultimately be "net losers." His remarks were made during an interactive session at a conclave focused on mobility, amid rising concerns following the US's new fees on H1B visas. Jaishankar underscored the need for India to persuade other countries that harnessing talent across borders benefits everyone. He stated, "That they would be net losers if they erect too many roadblocks to the flow of talent."

He suggested that resistance to talent mobility may be linked to some countries' strategies to relocate manufacturing from China.

Highlighting the significance of legal mobility, Jaishankar noted that remittances to India reached USD 135 billion last year, nearly double the country's exports to the US.

He addressed illegal mobility concerns, warning that it often connects to trafficking and various political agendas. —*PTI*

SIR in WB is Shah's ploy: Didi

MALDA, 3 DEC

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday tore into the BJP over the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, accusing Union Home Minister Amit Shah of "orchestrating" the exercise to "capture West Bengal by trickery."

Addressing an anti-SIR rally in Gazole, she said the saffron camp had "miscalculated Bengal's pulse" and had ended up "digging its own grave" by pushing for a hurried revision process that triggered panic among citizens. She said that the EC's 4 November rollout of SIR had unleashed "widespread fear."

She clarified that the TMC was not opposing the revision but the "politically driven haste."

Trinamool Congress MPs staged a protest on Wednesday on Parliament premises over pending Central dues to Bengal. TMC MPs gathered at the Prerna Sthal in Parliament complex, holding placards alleging that the Centre owed West Bengal Rs 2 lakh crore.

FIGHT TMC, WE WILL WIN POLLS: MODI

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked BJP MPs from West Bengal to counter the TMC government and win the Assembly elections next year. BJP MPs from West Bengal met Modi along with Khagen Murm, the Lok Sabha MP, who was attacked by a mob in October. —*PTI*

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee plays a traditional musical instrument during a public meeting in Malda, West Bengal PHOTO: PTI

T'gana BJP protests over Revanth's 'anti-Hindu' remarks

HYDERABAD, 3 DEC

Telangana's BJP women's and youth wings protested against Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's alleged anti-Hindu comments on Wednesday. Activists from the Mahila Morcha and Yuva Morcha gathered at the party's headquarters in Nampally, chanting slogans and demanding an apology from Reddy, whom BJP Mahila Morcha state president Shilpa Reddy described as having made "shameful" remarks.

BJP state President N Ramchander Rao had called for protests, including the burning of effigies, across Telangana in response to the comments.

Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar condemned Reddy's statements, urging for unity among Hindus in the state.

During a ruling Congress executive meeting, Revanth Reddy discussed the party's inclusivity, drawing an analogy with Hinduism.

He stated, "How many gods are there for Hindus? Three crore? There is Hanuman for those who are not married... When we could not bring consensus on gods, I don't think we can have consensus on political leaders and DCC presidents." His comments were reportedly in response to internal unrest regarding new District Congress Committee appointments. —*PTI*

Police detain activists during a protest over Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's remarks, in Hyderabad, on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Cong got ₹517 cr in donations, barely half of BJP's haul

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

- The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) secured Rs 959 crore from electoral trusts during the same financial year. Among Congress' donors was ITC Ltd

The Congress party has reported receiving over Rs 517 crore in contributions for the financial year 2024-25, including a significant Rs 313 crore sourced from various electoral trusts. However, this was just over half of what the ruling BJP received.

The Election Commission has published the party's contribution report, highlighting notable donations from corporate entities such as ITC Limited, Hindustan Zinc Limited, and Century Plywoods (India) Limited.

Additionally, former union minister and senior Congress leader **P Chidambaram** made a personal contribution of Rs 3 crore to the party.

Key contributors from electoral trusts included the New Democratic Electoral Trust and the Progressive Electoral Trust.

In comparison, the ruling BJP secured Rs 959 crore from electoral trusts during the same financial year.

The TMC, which governs West Bengal, received Rs 184.5 crore, of which Rs 153.5 crore stemmed from electoral trusts, as reported to the poll authority for the year 2024-25. —*PTI*

INS VIKRANT ON THE PROW

Navy puts on show of strength in Kerala

T'PURAM, 3 DEC

The Indian Navy on Wednesday showcased its maritime prowess and multi-domain combat capabilities with an operational demonstration off the Shangumugham coast here.

President Droupadi Murmu is attending this event being held as part of the Navy Day celebrations.

Nineteen major war vessels, including indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, one submarine, four fast intervention boats, and 32 aircraft — fighter jets, surveillance planes and helicopters — are part of the show, a top naval officer said here.

A cascade of applause welcomed INS Vikrant as it sailed across the horizon, and a MiG-29 aircraft took off from its deck. The navy showcased its state-of-the-art frontline frigates and missile corvettes.

The vessels included Kolkata-class destroyer INS Kolkata, INS Imphal, and Nilgiri-class frigate INS Udaygiri. Among the aircraft was MH-60R, which shot flares in the sky to greet the president, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

Four Dornier aircraft streaked the sky in 'bomb burst' formation, Hawks, Sea King and Chetak helicopters.

An anti-piracy and hostage rescue operation with insertion of the elite Marine Commandos (MARCOS) of the Navy onboard a vessel at sea was simulated.

"The operational demonstration brings together state-of-the-art naval platforms operating in all dimensions, showcasing the naval operation prowess and combat capabilities at sea, in air, under water and on land," Indian Navy spokesperson Capt Vivek Madhwal told PTI here.

Earlier, Murmu was received by Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, in the presence of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, and Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi at the technical area of the airport here. —*PTI*

Navy conducts operational demonstration during at the Navy Day celebrations in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Woman lawyer creates ruckus in SC, escorted out

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The Supreme Court on Wednesday witnessed high drama when a woman lawyer was escorted out of the Chief Justice of India's courtroom after repeatedly interrupting proceedings to raise an unlisted matter. Appearing before a bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and N K Singh, she alleged that her close friend had been murdered in a Delhi guest house and claimed that the police officer who initially refused to register the FIR had now been made the Investigating Officer. The bench advised her to follow due process and file a proper petition, and even directed another lawyer to assist her, but she refused to leave. As she persisted, resisted female marshals and shouted, "Don't misbehave, don't touch me," the livestream was briefly muted before she was escorted out. *—PTI*

Socialist leader Pannalal Surana dies at 93

SOLAPUR, 3 DEC

Veteran socialist leader Pannalal Surana has died in Solapur after a brief illness, family sources confirmed on Wednesday. He was 93 and had been admitted to hospital late on Tuesday night. His body will be donated for scientific research and medical education. Surana dedicated his life to securing justice for oppressed communities. He served as president of the Rashtra Seva Dal, founded by Sane Guruji, and joined Acharya Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement in Bihar. Imprisoned for 18 months during the Emergency, he later edited the Marathi daily Marathwada and authored several books on politics, economics and agriculture. *—PTI*

'Bomb' email sparks search at Pune school

PUNE, DEC 3

Police in Pune carried out an extensive search at a private international school in Hinjewadi after the institution received an email claiming a bomb had been planted. The school was evacuated, and no suspicious items have been found so far. The email, sent around midnight on Tuesday and discovered by school authorities on Wednesday morning, warned that an explosive device would be detonated on the premises. The Hinjewadi police, along with the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS), conducted the search and are continuing to examine the campus. Authorities have launched an investigation into the email and its origin, though no threat has been confirmed. *—PTI*

Ex-TDB prez's bail plea denied in Sabarimala case

KOLLAM, 3 DEC

A vigilance court in Kollam, Kerala, has dismissed the bail application of N Vasu, former president of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), accused of involvement in the disappearance of gold from the Sreekovil (sanctum sanctorum) of the Lord Ayyappa shrine. Vasu's plea for bail, citing health issues and asserting his lack of involvement in the case, was rejected by the court. His arrest in November marked the first significant apprehension in an investigation led by a Special Investigation Team (SIT), operating under the Kerala High Court's oversight. The SIT is examining two distinct cases related to the loss of gold, with six individuals arrested, including the primary suspect, Unnikrishnan Potty, and former TDB president A Padmakumar. *—PTI*

Cal HC overturns own order scrapping 32K teachers' appointments

KOLKATA, 3 DEC

A division bench of the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday set aside a single bench order that had annulled the appointments of 32,000 primary school teachers in West Bengal. The teachers were recruited in 2016 through the Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET) 2014 panel by the West Bengal Board of Primary Education.

The bench of Justices Tapabrata Chakraborty and Reetabrata Kumar Mitra held that it was not inclined to uphold the earlier ruling, noting that irregularities had not been proven across all appointments. Terminating employment after nine years, it said, would have a profound impact on the teachers and their families.

The court observed that the CBI, which had been asked to investigate alleged recruitment irregularities, initially identified 264 appointments where candidates appeared to have received an additional one mark. However, the agency found no evidence that this was done under external instructions. Another 96 teachers also came under scrutiny but were reinstated under a Supreme Court order.

The bench said the available evidence did not justify cancelling the entire selection process. The single bench of then Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay had in May 2023 terminated the 32,000 appointments, citing alleged fraud and non-compliance with recruitment rules, including the possibility that some candidates had been appointed without the mandatory aptitude test — a claim the division bench said remained unsubstantiated by investigators.

Aggrieved candidates sought a stay on the division bench's order, but the plea was rejected.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee welcomed the judgment, calling it "a great relief" and reiterating the government's commitment to generating, not taking away, jobs. *—PTI*

SC allows deported pregnant woman to return to India

Was pushed across the border on suspicion of being B'deshi

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The Supreme Court on Wednesday permitted the entry of a pregnant woman, Sunali Khatun, and her eight-year-old child into India on "humanitarian grounds", months after they were pushed into Bangladesh. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi directed the West Bengal government to care for the minor and instructed the chief medical officer of Birbhum district to provide all necessary medical assistance, including free delivery, to Khatun.

The bench recorded Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's submission that the competent authority had agreed to allow their entry purely on humanitarian considerations, without prejudice to the Centre's position that the two are Bangladeshi nationals. They will be kept under surveillance.

The court was hearing the Centre's appeal against a 26 September Calcutta High Court order, which had quashed the Union government's decision to deport Khatun and others, terming the deportation "illegal". The Supreme Court said Khatun and her child would eventually be brought back to Delhi, from where they were taken and deported in June. However, senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Sanjay Hegde, representing Khatun's father, argued they should instead be taken to Birbhum, where her family lives.

PHOTO: PTI

The counsels also urged the court to address the cases of others, including Khatun's husband, still in Bangladesh. Mehta maintained the Centre would contest their claim of Indian citizenship. Justice Bagchi noted that if Khatun establishes she is the daughter of Bhodu Sheikh, it would suffice to prove nationality.

The families, daily wage workers in Delhi's Rohini Sector 26 for over two decades, were allegedly detained on 18 June on suspicion of being Bangladeshi nationals and

Restrict arguments to 15 minutes: SC to Delhi riots accused

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed lawyers for the accused in the February 2020 Delhi riots case to restrict oral arguments to 15 minutes, with Additional Solicitor General S V Raju allowed 30 minutes for clarification. The bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria posted the matter for December 9 and asked defence lawyers to submit permanent addresses. Seeking bail, Sharjeel Imam said he was being unfairly labelled a "dangerous intellectual terrorist", noting he was arrested before the riots. Senior advocates for Umar Khalid and Gulfisha Fatima highlighted their prolonged incarceration. The accused face UAPA and IPC charges as alleged "masterminds" of the riots. *—PTI*

Waves crash against the seaside during rough sea conditions triggered by Cyclone Ditwah, in Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu **PHOTO: PTI**

Cyclone Ditwah devastates TN

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Tamil Nadu is grappling with the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah, as AIADMK member I S Inbadurai highlighted the severe consequences for farmers during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha. He urged the Centre to send an assessment team immediately, noting that thousands of acres of cropland remain submerged and that crops such as paddy, banana, and sugarcane have been decimated.

Inbadurai reported that paddy fields in Tirunelveli district are entirely underwater, threatening the livelihoods of countless farming families. He called attention to the failure of both state and central governments to provide timely assistance and proper crop damage assessments. "We have not received adequate support for farmers who lack updated title deeds, which prevents them from obtaining crop insurance," he lamented.

As the rain continues to pour, Chennai and nearby districts are experiencing widespread flooding. Authorities rescued nine individuals from marooned houses in Red Hills, relocating them to relief camps. With heavy rain persisting for over a week, schools and colleges in several areas were closed to safeguard students. *—PTI*

As smog chokes Delhi, Centre cracks down on industries

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

In response to the continuing hazardous air quality, the Centre has issued a stern warning to industries in Delhi-NCR to install real-time emission monitoring systems and air pollution control devices by 31 December 2025, or face potential closure. This directive follows a review meeting chaired by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, where it was highlighted that 2,254 highly polluting industries have yet to connect their Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS) to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) server.

"Strict action, including closure, will be taken against industries that do not meet the 31 December deadline," stated CPCB Chairperson Vir Vikram Yadav. All medium and large red-category units in sectors such as food processing, textiles, and metals must comply with this mandate.

Additionally, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has instructed Punjab and Haryana to devise an action plan this year to curb stubble burning for the upcoming paddy harvesting season. An expert committee will also be formed to tackle vehicular pollution.

On the air quality front, Delhi's reported Air Quality Index (AQI) was 335 this morning, categorising it as 'very poor' for the second consecutive day. The CPCB reaffirmed the integrity of its monitoring processes, rejecting claims of data manipulation, which were made by opposition parties, asserting that "the monitoring stations are automated, and human intervention is not possible".

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has defended the current air quality monitoring system, amidst rising concerns and accusations regarding the manipulation of pollution data. *—PTI*

Delhi's reported AQI of 335 on Wednesday categorising it as 'very poor' for the second consecutive day **PHOTO: PTI**

EC ATTACHES ASSETS

'Coldriff used raw material without quality checks'

LUCKNOW, 3 DEC

The manufacturer of Coldrif cough syrup, consumption of which is alleged to have caused the deaths of at least 20 children in Madhya Pradesh, used industrial-grade raw materials without quality checks, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has found.

The agency said Chennai-based Sresan Pharmaceuticals sourced industrial-grade inputs instead of pharma-grade materials, buying them in cash without invoices to avoid records. The ED also alleged "rampant unfair trade practices" to suppress manufacturing costs and inflate profits, terming the gains as proceeds of crime under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

Two residential flats belonging to proprietor G Ranganathan and his family in Chennai's Kodambakkam area, valued at Rs 2.04 crore, have been attached. Ranganathan was arrested by Madhya Pradesh Police in October.

The ED said officials of the Tamil Nadu Drugs Control Department were in frequent contact with Ranganathan but failed to conduct mandatory annual inspections as required under the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules. The Madhya Pradesh Police FIR stated that Coldrif contained toxic Diethylene Glycol and Ethylene Glycol far above safe limits, causing acute renal failure in children. Separately, the Uttar Pradesh STF arrested a fourth accused, Alok Pratap Singh, in Lucknow for illegal storage and trade of banned codeine-based cough syrup, recovering a large consignment linked to an interstate and cross-border supply network. *—PTI*

Accused in Delhi blast produced before NIA court

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Jasir Bilal Wani, a primary suspect in the Red Fort blast case, appeared before a Delhi court on Wednesday. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) presented Wani to the court as the seven-day custody granted by Principal Sessions and District Judge Anju Bajaj Chandna, which commenced on 27 November, came to a close. Wani, a resident of Qazigund in Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir, is reportedly a close associate of suicide bomber Umar and faces allegations of providing technical assistance in drone modifications and attempting to create rockets in the lead-up to the tragic car blast on 10 November that resulted in 13 fatalities near the iconic Red Fort in Delhi.—*PTI*

BJP leader flays Dharali flood rescue

DEHRADUN, 3 DEC

BJP leader Colonel Ajay Kothiyal (retd) has sharply criticised the rescue efforts after the 5 August cloudburst in Dharali, alleging that 147 bodies remain buried under debris four months later. Speaking at the World Summit on Disaster Management in Dehradun, he questioned the state's capability, noting that the Army had rescued 10 soldiers from debris in Harshil. He accused officials and scientists of making excuses instead of focusing on rehabilitation. The Congress said his remarks expose failures of the BJP-led government, while the ruling party said his concerns would be examined. *—PTI*

Class 10 student assaulted by seniors in T'gana school

HYDERABAD, 3 DEC

A class 10 student at a state-run residential school in Telangana was allegedly beaten up by a group of senior intermediate students, leading to the suspension of six of them, officials said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on 29 November in the hostel of the government-run residential school located in Rajapet mandal of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. A video of the assault later circulated on social media.

School authorities said the attack was not a case of ragging but arose from "ego issues" among the students. Two classmates of the victim were also beaten when they tried to stop the seniors, they said. The class 10 student alleged he was targeted after being elected the school's vice-captain.

According to him, some seniors, "unable to digest" his new role, assaulted him with bats and wickets while he was asleep on 29 November.

On Tuesday, the boy's mother and family members confronted the principal and other authorities, questioning why senior students had attacked her son instead of reporting grievances to staff. *—PTI*

TO PREVENT MISUSE

OTP must for Tatkal tickets bought at reservation counters

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

- Under the new system, passengers will receive an OTP on the mobile number indicated in the reservation form, and ticket confirmation will only occur after successful verification of this OTP.

The Indian Railway Ministry has announced that passengers will soon need to provide a one-time password (OTP) received on their mobile phones to book Tatkal train tickets at reservation counters. This initiative, aimed at preventing misuse of last-minute ticket bookings, was piloted on 17 November and has since expanded to cover 52 trains, with plans to roll it out across all remaining services shortly.

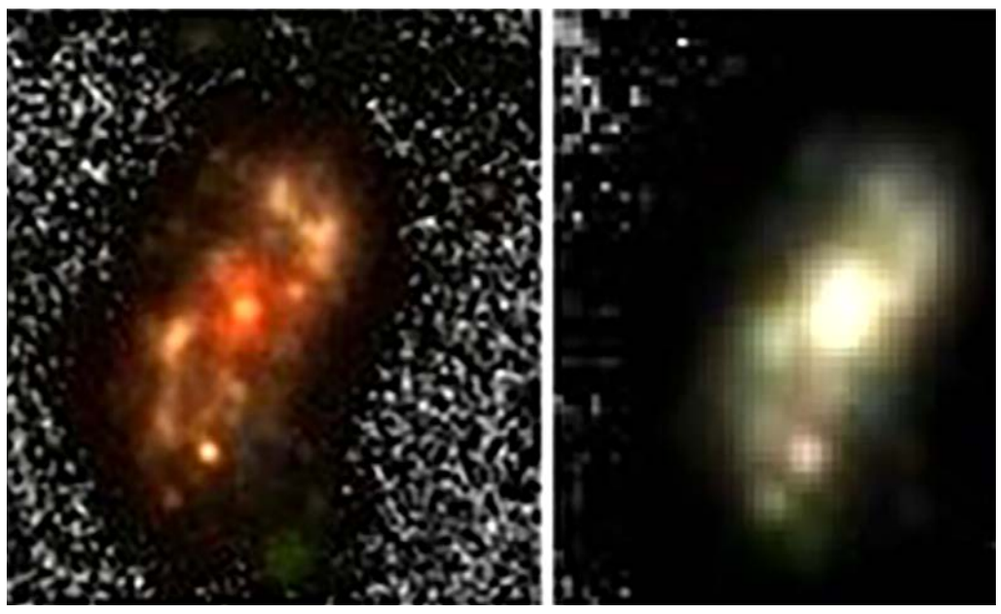
Under the new system, passengers will receive an OTP on the mobile number indicated in the reservation form, and ticket confirmation will only occur after successful verification of this OTP. "This system... is proposed to make the last-minute ticket-booking facility more convenient for common users," explained the ministry.

The officials noted the initiative is designed to ensure that genuine passengers have improved access to high-demand Tatkal tickets. They highlighted this development as a significant move towards enhancing transparency, passenger convenience, and overall security in railway ticketing. In recent months, the Railway Ministry has introduced several measures to provide fair access to ticket reservations and deter booking agents from exploiting the system. In July, it required Aadhaar verification through OTP for online Tatkal ticket bookings, and as of 1 October, only Aadhaar-authenticated users have been permitted to book reserved general tickets via the IRCTC website or app during the first 15 minutes of ticket availability for any train. —PTI

The officials noted the initiative is designed to ensure that genuine passengers have improved access to high-demand Tatkal tickets **PHOTO: AI**

COSMIC SURPRISE

Two researchers from Pune's National Centre for Radio Astrophysics have identified one of the most distant spiral galaxies ever observed — a massive, well-formed system named Alaknanda, seen as it existed 1.5 billion years after the Big Bang. Detected using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, the galaxy lies at a redshift of 4, its light travelling over 12 billion years to Earth. Despite the early epoch, Alaknanda resembles Milky Way, containing about 10 billion solar masses in stars and forming new ones at 63 solar masses per year. The discovery challenges theories that early galaxies were too chaotic for spiral structures ***PHOTO: PTI***



Why does the govt want SIM-bound messaging apps

India's decision to mandate continuous SIM linkage for all messaging applications has ignited a sharp divide between telecom operators and global technology platforms, setting the stage for yet another policy confrontation in the country's fast-evolving digital regulatory landscape.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT), through a directive issued on 28 November, 2025, has instructed that messaging services such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Arattai, Snapchat, ShareChat, JioChat and Josh must remain operational on a device only if an active SIM card is physically present. The move, the government argues, is crucial to plugging security gaps allegedly exploited by cybercriminals perpetrating large-scale, often cross-border digital fraud.

The directive has set strict deadlines. Within 90 days, all app-based communication services must ensure that users' accounts remain functional only when the specific SIM used for initial registration is inserted in the device. Additionally, all web or desktop versions of these applications must automatically log users out at least once every six hours, requiring re-authentication through a QR code for continued access. All affected platforms have been asked to submit compliance reports within 120 days, with the Centre warning that non-compliance may invite action under the Telecommunications Act, 2023, the Telecom Cyber Security Rules, and other applicable laws.

Within 90 days, the app must ensure that users' accounts remain functional only when SIM used for registration is inserted in device. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Government's rationale: Tackling cross-border fraud

According to the DoT, the SIM-binding requirement is "essential" to restore traceability in the digital ecosystem. Officials argue that many messaging apps continue functioning even after the user removes, replaces or deactivates the SIM card used during initial verification. This, the government contends, creates an exploitable gap that fraudsters use to conceal their identities.

With cyber-fraud losses crossing Rs 22,800 crore in 2024, SIM-binding and periodic logout mechanisms are intended to ensure that every active messaging account and linked web session is anchored to a live, KYC-verified Indian mobile number. The government has clarified that the directive does not affect users whose SIM remains in their device while travelling.

Telecom operators, represented by the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), have welcomed the move. COAI said the directive would bolster national security, enhance user protection, and help curb emerging fraud vectors. The association has pledged full support to ensure "seamless implementation".

BIF flags overreach

In stark contrast, Broadband India Forum (BIF), representing major technology firms including Meta and Google, has raised serious objections. Calling the directive a "problematic instance of regulatory overreach", BIF has urged the government to pause implementation timelines, initiate public consultation, and establish a technical working group involving OS providers, TIUEs (Telecommunication Identifier User Entities), licensees, and security experts.

BIF argues that the directions raise fundamental questions of jurisdiction. The Telecommunications Act, it contends, does not empower the government to impose telecom-style operational mandates on OTT communication platforms, which fall squarely under the IT Act and are administered by the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY). The creation of the TIUE category under the Telecom Cyber Security Amendment Rules had already triggered fears that OTT services could inadvertently be subjected to telecom regulatory obligations, fears that BIF says have now "materialised".

TV Ramachandran, President of BIF, said that while the industry supports strengthening India's cyber-security framework, any measure of such magnitude must be backed by legislative sanction, respect jurisdictional boundaries, and undergo transparent scrutiny to avoid "disruption for millions of genuine users".

Consumer impact

BIF has also highlighted the consumer inconvenience and technical hurdles posed by continuous SIM binding. Many legitimate use cases, such as travellers and NRIs using Indian numbers over Wi-Fi abroad, professionals relying on uninterrupted web-client access, families and multi-SIM users, and elderly or low-literacy users, could face repeated disruptions due to forced re-authentication and SIM dependence.

The forum warns that the selective applicability of the directive could lead to regulatory arbitrage, with fraudsters simply migrating to platforms not covered under the mandate. This, it says, not only distorts the market but also undermines equality principles by treating similar services differently.

On technical feasibility, BIF notes that factors such as iOS-level restrictions, dual-SIM and eSIM complexities, and required architectural redesign make stringent SIM-binding an operationally burdensome solution. Instead of a narrow, platform-specific mandate, it argues that the government should prioritise strong SIM-KYC enforcement, which could yield more meaningful gains in combating fraud originating from areas such as Jamtara or through mule SIM networks.

While the government maintains that SIM binding is vital to enhancing traceability and preventing cross-border scams, BIF insists that the measure offers limited incremental protection against sophisticated fraud networks and may cause disproportionate inconvenience to consumers and businesses.

As India pushes ahead with expanding its cyber-security regime under the new Telecom Act, the clash between telecom operators and digital platforms underscores a deeper tension over regulatory jurisdiction, proportionality, and user rights. Whether the DoT pauses implementation for wider consultation may now determine how the next chapter of India's digital governance debate unfolds. *—PTI*

SALAR ساڈا

Govt has signed Aravalli Hills' death warrant: Sonia

Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday launched one of her sharpest attacks yet on the Modi government's environmental record, alleging a "venal streak of cynicism" in policy decisions and warning that recent amendments to forest laws have "nearly signed a death warrant" for the fragile Aravalli hills.

In a strongly worded article published in a national newspaper, Sonia demanded that the government withdraw amendments pushed through Parliament to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the Forest Conservation Rules (2022), calling them harmful to forest protection and "anti-Adivasi".

At the centre of her criticism is the government's declaration that hills in the Aravalli range under 100 metres in elevation will no longer fall under restrictions on mining. Sonia argued that this effectively opens the door for illegal miners and resource mafias to destroy nearly 90 per cent of the range, which lies below that threshold.

Sonia underlined the ecological and historical importance of the Aravallis, one of the world's oldest fold mountain systems, stretching from Gujarat through Rajasthan to Haryana. The hills, she noted, have long prevented the spread of desertification from the Thar Desert to the Gangetic plains, guarded historic forts such as Chittorgarh and Ranthambore, and hosted sites of spiritual significance across north-west India.

"The Modi government has now nearly signed a death warrant for these hills, already denuded by illegal mining," she wrote.

Her warning comes as the National Capital Region enters its annual smog season. Sonia connected Delhi's toxic winter air to the degradation of the surrounding landscape, arguing that the crisis cannot be viewed in isolation.

"A hazy mist of dust, smoke and particulate matter has been settling down on millions of citizens," she said. "Estimates of the human toll of this pollution go as high as 34,000 deaths in just 10 cities annually."

Sonia also highlighted a recent Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) report showing that 13–15 per cent of tested groundwater samples in Delhi contain uranium levels above permissible limits. She noted that water samples from Punjab and Haryana show even higher concentrations, warning of "frightening health implications" for populations using such water for daily needs.

"These news items cannot be viewed disparately," she wrote. "They are causes and consequences of a crisis that has engulfed India in the last decade: a deep-seated disregard for the environment in government policymaking."

DILUTION OF SAFEGUARDS

Sonia accused the government of systematically weakening environmental regulations since 2014. Among her key points:

- The Forest Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2023 exempts large categories of land and projects from forest clearance rules, making diversion easier.
- The Draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020 sought to dilute public hearings, expand exemptions and reduce compliance reporting.
- The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification 2018 relaxed construction norms along shorelines, opening sensitive coastal ecosystems to real estate and industrial development.

She argued that the Environment Ministry has gained a reputation for circumventing due process rather than safeguarding natural resources. "It has been more often in the news for weakening regulations than implementing them."

Pitting environment against communities

Sonia flagged what she termed a "disturbing trend" of pitting environmental protection against local communities.

She criticised the Forest Survey of India for attributing forest loss to the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, calling the claim "mischievous". She also objected to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) proposal to evict nearly 65,000 families from tiger reserves, saying it violated the spirit of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which requires relocations to be voluntary.

"It ranged the environment unnecessarily against the very communities that have protected forests for generations," she argued.

A 'NEW DEAL' FOR INDIA'S ENVIRONMENT

Sonia urged a comprehensive reassessment of environmental laws and policies introduced over the past decade. Her recommendations include:

- Halting large-scale deforestation underway in Great Nicobar, Hasdeo Aranya (Chhattisgarh), and Dhirauli (Madhya Pradesh).
- Cracking down on illegal mining in the Aravallis and other eco-sensitive regions such as the Western Ghats.
- Ending indiscriminate mountain destruction across the Himalayan belt, which has caused severe human losses in recent years.
- Withdrawing amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act and the 2022 Forest Conservation Rules, which she says permit clearing forests without consulting local communities.

She also criticised the practice of granting post-facto environmental clearances to companies that have violated laws, calling it a "dangerous" and "illogical" innovation of the current government.

"India needs a new deal for the environment," Sonia concluded. "First, we must resolve to do no further harm." Whether the government responds to her demands remains unclear. But her intervention underscores growing political and civil society unease over the pace of environmental deregulation, and the future of India's most fragile landscapes. *—PTI*

Aravallis, one of the world's oldest fold mountain systems, stretching from Gujarat through Rajasthan to Haryana ***PHOTO: ANI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Asian floods are no fluke, they're climate warning, say scientists

Southeast Asia is grappling with one of its most destructive flood seasons in years, as late-forming storms and relentless rains sweep through the region, overwhelming communities and exposing the limits of national disaster-preparedness systems.

More than 1,400 people have died across Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand, with a further 800 still missing in floods and landslides. In Indonesia, entire villages remain unreachable after bridges, embankments and roads were washed away. Sri Lanka faces severe shortages of clean water in inundated districts. In Thailand, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin has publicly acknowledged shortcomings in the government's response.

Neighbouring Malaysia is still recovering from one of its most severe flood episodes, which killed three people and displaced thousands. Meanwhile, Vietnam and the Philippines have endured a year of punishing storms and repeated floods that have claimed hundreds of lives.

Scientists say what feels unprecedented is in fact exactly what they have warned for decades: a new era of frequent, unpredictable and increasingly devastating climate-driven extreme weather.

"Southeast Asia should brace for a likely continuation, and potential worsening, of extreme weather in 2026 and for many years following," said Jemilah Mahmood, who leads the Sunway Centre for Planetary Health in Kuala Lumpur.

CLIMATE TURBOCHARGING BEHIND THE CHAOS

Climate patterns in the past two years have set the stage for the severe conditions unfolding today. Atmospheric levels of heat-trapping carbon dioxide rose by the largest annual increase on record in 2024, a surge the UN's World Meteorological Organization says has "turbocharged the climate", fuelling more intense weather extremes.

Asia is warming at nearly twice the global average, and scientists agree that both the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are increasing. Warmer ocean temperatures are generating stronger, wetter storms, while rising sea levels are amplifying storm surges.

"Storms are now arriving later in the year, one after another, as climate change disrupts air and ocean currents — including patterns such as El Niño, which keeps waters warmer for longer and extends the typhoon season," said Benjamin Horton, professor of earth science at City University of Hong Kong. With more moisture in the air and shifting wind patterns, storms can also form more rapidly.

"While the total number of storms may not dramatically increase, their severity and unpredictability will," Horton said.

GOVTS OVERWHELMED BY UNPREDICTABILITY

The scale and pace of recent disasters are stretching Southeast Asian governments thin. According to Aslam Perwaiz of the Bangkok-based Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, the region's disaster-response systems are still geared primarily towards reacting to crises rather than preparing for them.

"Future disasters will give us even less lead time to prepare," Perwaiz warned.

In Sri Lanka's worst-hit provinces, the situation is painfully familiar. Sarala Emmanuel, a human-rights researcher in Batticaloa, said little has changed since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which killed 230,000 people. "The poor and marginalised communities are the worst affected," she said, pointing to tea plantation workers living in landslide-prone areas.

Unregulated development is compounding the damage. Sandun Thudugala of Sri Lanka's Law and Society Trust said the country must rethink how it builds, plans and zones, recognising that extreme weather will increasingly be the norm. In Indonesia, viral videos showing logs swept down rivers raised concerns about the role of deforestation. Provinces such as Aceh, North Sumatra and West Sumatra — all hit by this season's floods — have lost 19,600 sq km of forest since 2000, according to Global Forest Watch. Officials have rejected claims of illegal logging, saying the timber appeared old and likely originated from private plots.

A man wades through a flooded road carrying a cat in Colombo, Sri Lanka ***PHOTO: PTI***

CYCLONE DITWAH DEVASTATION TO COST SRI LANKA

$7 BILLION

COUNTING THE BILLIONS LOST

Across the region, the economic toll is staggering. Vietnam estimates that over $3 billion has been lost to floods, landslides and storms in the first 11 months of the year. Thailand's government data is incomplete, but the agriculture ministry reports $47 million in losses since August. The Kasikorn Research Center calculates that the November floods in southern Thailand alone caused around $781 million in damage, potentially shaving 0.1 per cent off GDP.

Indonesia records an annual average loss of $1.37 billion from natural disasters, though figures for this year are not yet available. For Sri Lanka, still recovering from a financial crisis, disaster-related losses add further strain to an economy already burdened by foreign debt. "Countries like ours contribute a tiny fraction of global emissions, yet we are at the frontline of climate impacts," Thudugala said. "There is an urgent need for compensation for the loss and damage we suffer because of global warming."

For residents, the devastation is deeply personal. "My request is support to recover some of the losses we have suffered," said Rohan Wickramarachchi, a business owner in Peradeniya whose building flooded up to the second floor. He, like dozens of families, must now rebuild from scratch.

ACTION STILL FAR BEHIND SCALE OF CRISIS

Global leaders attempted to respond at the COP30 climate summit in Brazil last month, pledging to triple funding for climate adaptation and mobilise $1.3 trillion annually by 2035. But the commitments fall far short of developing nations' demands, and it remains unclear whether the money will materialise *—PTI*

Trump posts 160 times in 4 hrs on Truth Social

WASHINGTON, 3 DEC

Amidst concerns about his energy levels at age 79, US President Donald Trump demonstrated an astonishing fervour on Truth Social, posting 160 times in less than four hours on Monday night. Between 7.09pm and 11.57pm ET, Trump's messages exceeded one per minute, targeting familiar adversaries like Democratic Senator Mark Kelly. His posts included self-congratulatory videos, outlandish conspiracy theories (including those from Infowars host Alex Jones), and repeated claims about illegal voting. Trump's prolific activity on the platform was notable for its heavy reliance on reposting content. The President resumed posting early Tuesday, rallying support for upcoming elections while declaring, "Truth Social is the best." *—Agencies*

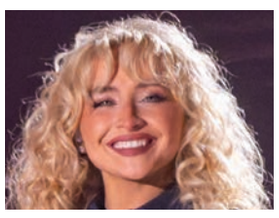


PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Inhumane: Sabrina flays ICE after it uses her song

WASHINGTON, 3 DEC

Singer Sabrina Carpenter expressed her outrage at the White House for using her music in a video depicting Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) arrests in Chicago. Carpenter labelled the video as "evil and disgusting," asserting, "Do not ever involve me or my music to benefit your inhumane agenda." The White House responded through spokesperson Abigail Jackson, stating, "Here's a Short n' Sweet message for Sabrina Carpenter: we won't apologize for deporting dangerous criminal illegal murderers, rapists, and pedophiles." Carpenter joins artists like Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo, who have also objected to their work being used to endorse controversial government policies. *—Agencies*

FBI offers $50,000 for info on Indian murder suspect

NEW YORK, 3 DEC

The FBI has announced a reward of up to $50,000 for information regarding Nazeer Hameed, a 38-year-old Indian national accused of murdering Sasikala Narra, 38, and her six-year-old son Anish in Maple Shade, New Jersey, in March 2017. Six months after the incident, Hameed returned to India, prompting New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy to seek the Indian government's assistance for extradition. "This heinous crime shocked our state," Murphy stated. Authorities indicate that the motive remains unclear, but evidence links Hameed to the scene. "No border or distance should stand in the way of justice," urged Burlington County Prosecutor LaChia Bradshaw. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Doctor faces sentencing for role in Perry's death

LOS ANGELES, 3 DEC

Dr Salvador Plasencia, who pleaded guilty to illegally selling ketamine to the late Matthew Perry before his overdose, is set to be sentenced in Los Angeles. Prosecutors are seeking a three-year prison term for Plasencia, 44, after he illegally provided the drug to Perry, who sought it to manage his depression. Court documents reveal Plasencia called Perry a "moron" for being exploitable. The defence argues for leniency, highlighting Plasencia's previous success and remorse. Perry's family may speak at the hearing, the first of five in connection with the case. *—PTI*

19 countries can't get visas to US now

Govt halts new green cards, applications

WASHINGTON, DEC 3

The Trump administration is pausing all immigration applications such as requests for green cards for people from 19 countries banned from travel earlier this year, as part of sweeping immigration changes in the wake of the shooting of two National Guard troops.

The changes were outlined in a policy memo posted Tuesday on the website of US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The pause puts on hold a wide range of immigration-related decisions such as green card applications or naturalisations for immigrants from those 19 countries that the Trump administration has described as high-risk. It's up to the agency's Director, Joseph Edlow, on when to lift the pause, the memo said.

The administration in June banned travel to the US by citizens of 12 countries and restricted access for those from seven others, citing national security concerns.

The ban applied to citizens of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen while the restricted access applied to people from Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan and Venezuela.

At the time, no action was taken against immigrants from those countries who were already in the US before the travel ban went into effect.

But now, people already in the US — regardless of when they arrived — will come under extra scrutiny. The agency said it would conduct a comprehensive review of all "approved benefit requests" for immigrants who entered the country during the Biden administration. *—PTI*

Kash Patel in hot water for 'incompetence'

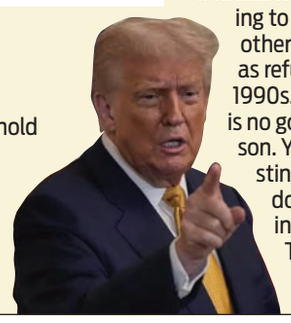
FBI Director Kash Patel is leading a "chronically under-performing" agency that is paralysed by fear, according to a 115-page report compiled by a national alliance of retired and active-duty FBI special agents and analysts. The leaks allege that Patel used private jets to visit his girlfriend and threw a tantrum for not having the right jacket. The report, set to be tabled in the Congress, say Patel is unqualified to be the head of the FBI.

US doesn't want 'stinking' Somalis: Trump

Trump said he did not want Somali immigrants in the US, saying residents of the war-ravaged eastern African country add little to the US. Somalis have been coming to Minnesota and other states, often as refugees, since the 1990s. "Their country is no good for a reason. Your country stinks and we don't want them in our country," Trump told press.

Trump may withhold SNAP funding from Democrat states

Trump's administration has said it will move to withhold crucial SNAP food aid from recipients in most Democratic-controlled states next week unless they provide information about those receiving the assistance – including their immigration status. The Justice Department said it was suing six more states over "failure" to produce detailed voter data.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (centre) Russian Presidential foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov (last) talk to US special envoy Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner, in Moscow, Russia *PHOTO: PTI*

No breakthrough in Ukraine peace talks: Kremlin

MOSCOW, 3 DEC

Five hours of talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US negotiators on the Ukraine war ended without any significant breakthrough, the Kremlin said.

Putin met US President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner in the Kremlin late Tuesday as part of a renewed push by the Trump administration to end the nearly four-year war. Both sides agreed not to disclose the substance of the talks.

Putin's aide Yuri Ushakov called the five-hour conversation "rather useful and constructive, rather substantive," but said that "a compromise hasn't been found" on the issue of territories, without which, he said, the Kremlin sees "no resolution to the crisis."

"Some of the American proposals seem more or less acceptable, but they need to be discussed. Some of the wording that was proposed to us doesn't suit us. So, the work will continue," Ushakov said.

There were other points of disagreement, although Ushakov did not provide further details. "We could agree on some things, and the President confirmed this to his interlocutors. Other things provoked criticism, and the President also didn't hide our critical and even negative attitude toward a number of proposals."

The meeting came days after US officials held talks with a Ukrainian team in Florida.

Earlier on Tuesday, Putin accused Ukraine's European allies of sabotaging efforts to end the war.

"If Europe suddenly wants to wage a war with us and starts it, we are ready right away. There can be no doubt about that," Putin said.

He also threatened to cut Ukraine "off from the sea" after Kyiv has attacked at least three of Russia's shadow fleet recently. He termed the strikes "piracy". *—Agencies*

Europe says Putin is wasting the world's time

Ukrainian and European officials on Wednesday accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of faking interest in peace efforts. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Putin should "stop wasting the world's time" as Foreign Ministers from European NATO countries, meeting in Brussels, showed little patience with Moscow.

MACRON ARRIVES IN CHINA FOR TALKS WITH XI

BEIJING, 3 DEC

Emmanuel Macron arrived in China on Wednesday for a three-day state visit focusing on trade and diplomatic talks as the French President seeks to enlist Beijing in pressuring Russia toward a ceasefire with Ukraine.

Macron will advocate for an agenda of cooperation in economic and trade matters aimed at achieving a balance that ensures "sustainable, solid growth that benefits everyone," his office said.

France is aiming to attract more investment from Chinese companies and facilitate market access for French exports. During the visit, officials from both nations are expected to sign several agreements in the energy, food industry, and aviation sectors.

Macron's talks with President Xi Jinping will also address Russia's war in Ukraine, particularly following a meeting Monday in Paris with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to discuss potential terms for a ceasefire.

"What we want ... is that China can convince and influence Russia to move toward a ceasefire as quickly as possible," a French top diplomatic official said.

Paris expects Beijing to "refrain from providing Russia with any means whatsoever to continue the war," the official said. *—PTI*

Israel says it will reopen Rafah border

JERUSALEM, 3 DEC

Israel announced on Wednesday plans to reopen the Rafah crossing, a key Gaza border with Egypt, for Palestinians to exit the Strip as the peace deal appears to move forward.

Israel would coordinate with Egypt on the exit of Palestinians, under the supervision of a mission from the European Union.

Those wishing to leave Gaza will require "Israeli security approval," COGAT, the Israeli military body charged with facilitating aid to Gaza, said.

The ceasefire deal calls for the crossing to be opened for medical evacuations and for travel to and from the strip.

The crossing was sealed off in May 2024 when Israel's military invaded the area. It was briefly opened in February this year for the evacuation of sick and wounded Palestinians for treatment, as part of the previous ceasefire deal.

The World Health Organisation says there are more than 16,500 sick and wounded people who need to leave Gaza for medical care.

Meanwhile, Israel said that partial remains returned by Hamas did not match the hostages remaining in Gaza.

The missing remains of two hostages threaten to stall a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in its first phase. But by promising to open the Rafah crossing, Israel showed it was moving ahead with parts of the 20-point US-backed plan. *—PTI*

Israeli forces demolish the home of Abdul Karim Sanoubar, a suspected Palestinian militant who has been accused by Israel of planting bombs on buses in central Israel, in Nablus, West Bank *PHOTO: PTI*

Munir is 'igniting tensions' with Afghanistan, says ex-PM Imran

LAHORE, 3 DEC

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on Wednesday claimed that army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir was deliberately "igniting tensions" with Afghanistan.

The 73-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician made the remarks in a social media post a day after his sister, Dr Uzma Khan, met him at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail after more than a month following Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government's "special permission".

"Asim Munir's policies are disastrous for Pakistan. Because of his policies, terrorism has spiralled out of control," Khan said on X. "Munir has no concern for Pakistan's national interests. He is doing all this merely to please Western powers. He deliberately ignited tensions with Afghanistan so that he could be seen internationally as a so-called 'mujahid' (Islamic fighter)."

"Munir first threatened Afghans, then expelled refugees from Pakistan and carried out drone strikes whose consequences we now face in the form of rising terrorism," The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder said. He called Munir a "mentally unstable man".

Khan claimed that on Munir's orders, he and his wife have been facing "psychological torture". *—PTI*

Tunisian police detain leading human rights defender

TUNIS, 3 DEC

Tunisian police have arrested prominent opposition lawyer and human rights defender Ayachi Hammami at his home, following a five-year prison sentence handed down last week related to a "conspiracy against state security" case, his family reported. Hammami is part of a group of over 40 individuals, including political figures and business leaders, sentenced to prison terms from two to 45 years. Rights organisations have condemned as a systematic crackdown on dissent by President Kais Saied. *—PTI*

'Women, children trapped in RSF's newly seized Sudanese city'

CAIRO, 3 DEC

The Sudanese Doctor's network has raised alarm over the safety of dozens of women and children in the Sudanese city of Babanusa in West Kordofan state after the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) claimed to have taken control of transport junction.

The RSF has been sieging the city for two years, battling with the Sudan Armed Forces inthe

The Sudan Doctor's Network said that the RSF published videos showing dozens of women and children hiding in a building before the paramilitary group entered.

"These clashes threaten the fate of dozens of children and women," the doctor's group said in a statement.

The RSF taking control of the Babanusa comes shortly after it took control of el-Fasher, in an onslaught that Amnesty International said should be investigated for war crimes.

The RSF seized the city in a "surprise attack," shortly after declaring a three-month humanitarian truce with the Sudan Armed Forces.

Notably, the government has said that it still controls Babanusa. In recent days, the army airdropped supplies to its forces inside the city, which lost most of its population after 177,000 people fled, according to local relief committees. *—Salar News*

The civil war in Sudan is considered one of the world's largest humanitarian crisis *PHOTO: WFP*

Opium cultivation highest ever in Myanmar: UN

KUALA LUMPUR, 3 DEC

Opium poppy cultivation surged to its highest level in Myanmar this year, as the nation is embroiled in a civil war, says a United Nations survey.

The growth solidifies Myanmar's position as the world's main known source of illicit opium, after sharp declines in production in Afghanistan, following a ban by the Taliban.

The Myanmar Opium Survey 2025, issued Wednesday by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, found the area where opium is cultivated expanded by 17 per cent from 2024 to 53,100 hectares, the largest since 2015.

UNODC has also described Myanmar as the largest methamphetamine producer in the world.

Opium, which is processed into morphine and heroin, is harvested from poppy flowers. Myanmar's farmers have intensified opium cultivation as the country faced widespread poverty during the civil war that erupted after its army ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government of in February 2021. *—PTI*

11 YEARS LATER

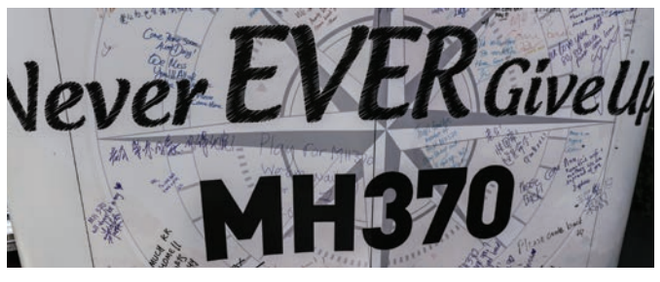
Malaysia to search for missing MH370

KUALA LUMPUR, 3 DEC

Malaysia's Transport Ministry said Wednesday that the deep-sea hunt for Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 (MH370) will resume on 30 December, renewing hopes of locating the jet, which vanished more than a decade ago.

The Boeing 777 plane disappeared from radar shortly after taking off on 8 March 2014, carrying 239 people, mostly Chinese, on a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Satellite data showed the plane turned from its flight path and headed south to the far-southern Indian Ocean, where it is believed to have crashed in the sea.



The transport ministry said in a statement that US-based marine robotics firm Ocean Infinity will search from 30 December 30 for 55 days, in targeted areas believed to have the highest likelihood of finding the missing aircraft.

Malaysia's government gave the green light in March for a "no-find, no-fee" contract with Ocean Infinity to resume the seabed search at a new 15,000-square-kilometre site in the ocean. Ocean Infinity will be paid USD 70 million only if the wreckage is discovered. The search was halted in April due to bad weather.

A multinational search failed to find any clues indicating its location, although debris washed ashore on the east African coast and Indian Ocean islands. A private search by Ocean Infinity in 2018 also found nothing. *—PTI*

- The Boeing 777 plane disappeared from radar shortly after taking off on 8 March 2014, carrying 239 people, mostly Chinese. Numerous searches since have found nothing

Japan firm, JSW to invests ₹15,750 cr in Bhushan Power

ORISSA, 3 DEC

Japan's JFE Steel Corporation and JSW Steel Limited have announced a joint venture to operate the steel business of Bhushan Power & Steel Limited (BPSL), marking one of the largest overseas investments in India's steel sector.

Under the agreement signed JFE will invest Rs 15,750 crore for a 50 per cent stake in JSW Kalinga Steel, subject to regulatory approvals. JSW acquired BPSL in 2019 for Rs 19,700 crore under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, and has since invested around Rs 3,500–Rs 4,500 crore in capital expenditure. BPSL runs an integrated steel plant and an iron ore mine in Odisha with annual crude steel capacity of 4.5million tones. The venture plans to increase capacity to 10 million tones by 2030, with scope of 15 million tones, positioning the asset among largest in India. *—Agencies*

Gold prices climb by Rs 670 to Rs 1.32 lakh/10g

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Gold prices climbed Rs 670 to Rs 1,32,200 per 10g in the national capital on Wednesday, as firm global trends and a steep fall in the rupee supported the safe-haven demand, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Tuesday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity closed at Rs 1,31,530 per 10g.

Traders said the rupee's slide to an all-time low against the US dollar pushed up bullion prices. However, silver snapped a six-day winning streak by declining Rs 460 to Rs 1,80,900 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes), as per the association. Spot gold was trading marginally higher at USD 4,207.67 per ounce, while silver advanced to USD 58.47 per ounce. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Blinkit unveils 'add items after ordering' feature

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Quick commerce (qcom) platform Blinkit has unveiled a new feature that allows users to add more items even after placing an order, enabling last-minute additions. Customers can add items while the order is still being packed. For this, the platform is not charging any extra delivery fees and is also eliminating the need to place a second order.

Qcom platforms are experimenting with different features. Zepto recently tested two new offerings. One is Super Mall, a new vertical for high-value products, and Zepto Diagnostics, an in-app diagnostics service under its pharma category.

Swiggy also announced a 'Maxxsaver' feature to increase customers' cart sizes. It also launched 'Food on Train,' a service available in 122 railway stations across India. *—Agencies*

Indian Gas Exchange to launch IPO

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The board of the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) has made the decision to go public in order to raise funds through an Initial Public Offering (IPO). The Indian Energy Exchange (IEX), which is the parent company of IGX, has not yet provided specific details regarding the size or timing of the issue.

According to a regulatory filing, the IGX Board of Directors approved the IPO during a meeting on 2 December 2025. The IPO will involve an offer for sale by certain existing and eligible shareholders, depending on market conditions and necessary regulatory approvals. It added that it will keep the exchanges informed of all significant developments as required by regulations. *—PTI*

Rupee closes below 90 for the first time against USD

It fell by 25P to close at fresh all-time low of 90.21

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

The rupee breached the 90-a-dollar level for the first time to settle at a fresh all-time low of 90.21 (provisional) on Wednesday, down 25 paise from its previous close, amid sustained foreign fund outflows and higher crude oil prices.

Uncertainty over the India-US trade deal, along with the lack of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) effort to stop the slide in the local unit, put further pressure on the rupee, according to forex traders.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 89.96 against the US dollar and fell to a record intraday low of 90.30 during the session before closing at a new all-time low of 90.21 (provisional), down 25 paise from its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee settled 43 paise down at a lifetime low of 89.96 against the US dollar, largely owing to continued short-covering from speculators and sustained importer demand for the American currency.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

On Tuesday, the rupee settled 43 paise down at a lifetime low of 89.96 against the US dollar

"The rupee hit a fresh all-time low of 90.30 amid selling pressure from foreign investors and a surge in crude oil prices. Uncertainty over the announcement of India-US trade deal has also weighed on the rupee. However, a weak US dollar index prevented a sharp fall," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.20 per cent lower at 99.16. *—PTI*

Not losing sleep over rupee's fall, says CEA

Chief Economics Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran on Wednesday said the government is not losing sleep over declining rupee. The falling rupee is not affecting inflation or exports, he said on the sidelines of CII event here. However, he expressed hope that it should improve next year. The rupee has depreciated about 5 per cent against the US dollar in 2025. A decline in the domestic equity markets and the absence of an India-US trade deal put further pressure on the local unit. *—PTI*

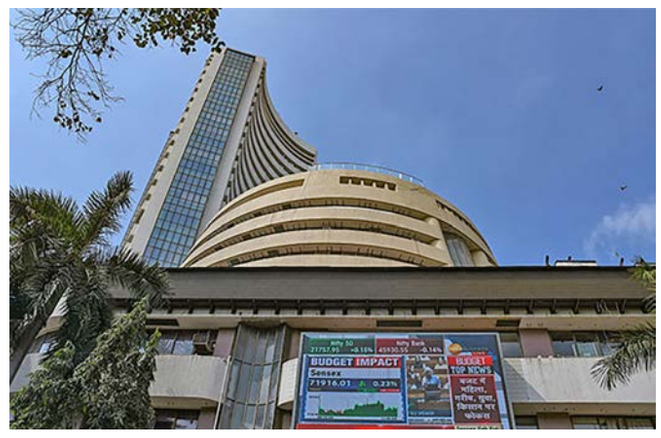
Mkts tumbles for the 4th day

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

Stock markets extended the losing run to the fourth consecutive day on Wednesday as persistent foreign fund outflows and the rupee breaching the psychological 90-to-dollar low hit investor sentiment, dragging the benchmark Sensex down by 31 points.

Falling for the fourth day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex dipped 31.46 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 85,106.81. The index opened lower and dropped further by 374.63 points or 0.44 per cent to hit a low of 84,763.64 due to profit-taking. Gains in IT and blue-chip ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank, however, helped the barometer pare some losses in the pre-close session.

The 50-share NSE Nifty skidded 46.20 points or 0.18 per cent to 25,986. After a flat start, the Nifty drifted gradually lower in early trade and then remained range-bound for most of the session.



Among Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics fell the most by 2.13 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, NTPC, State Bank of India, Adani Ports, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles and Bajaj Finserv were also among the major laggards.

IT shares rebounded as the rupee fell below 90 per dollar. TCS was the biggest Sensex gainer, rising by 1.41 per cent. Infosys rose 1.12 per cent while ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank also advanced.

The BSE midcap gauge dropped 0.95 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.43 per cent. *—PTI*

Ola starts 250-member service taskforce

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Ola Electric has launched a major overhaul of its after-sales service, deploying a rapid-response taskforce of around 250 specialists across India. The team, comprising technicians and operational experts under the supervision of senior leadership, is focused on clearing repair backlogs and improving the availability of spare parts for the company's growing electric scooter fleet. According to a source involved in the initiative, Ola's "Hyperservice" programme aims to fundamentally reshape electric two-wheeler servicing in the country. Backlogs in Bengaluru have been largely resolved, and the framework will be extended to other key markets.

The taskforce is working closely with service centers through real-time communication channels to address delays. *—PTI*

Services sector growth surges in Nov: PMI

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

India's services sector experienced a notable growth surge in November, rebounding from a slowdown in October, according to the latest PMI survey. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index climbed to 59.8 in November, up from 58.9 the previous month, spurred by robust new business intakes.

"India's services PMI Business Activity Index rose from 58.9 in October to 59.8 in November, driven by robust new business intakes that fuelled output growth," stated Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC. While international sales showed improvement, the growth rate reached an eight-month low due to stiff competition abroad. "International sales expanded at an eight-month low due to fierce overseas services competition," Bhandari noted.

Moreover, input price inflation reached its lowest in nearly five-and-a-half years, leading to minimal increases in selling charges. Although job creation in the services sector continued, the pace was moderate and consistent with the previous months.

The HSBC India Composite PMI Output Index also fell from 60.4 in October to 59.7 in November, reflecting the slowest growth rate since May. Despite diminished optimism attributed to competition and upcoming state assembly elections, businesses remain positive about future growth, buoyed by favourable demand & marketing strategies. *—PTI*

'Pan masala packs must display retail price'

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The Department of Consumer Affairs has mandated that all pan masala packages, irrespective of size or weight, must display the Retail Sale Price (RSP) and other mandatory declarations under the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011.

The amendment, notified through GSR 881(E), will come into force on 1 February, 2026, an official statement said.

From that date, all manufacturers, packers and importers of pan masala must ensure full compliance. The amendment removes the earlier exemption that allowed small packs of 10 grams or less to avoid certain declarations. Now, even these smaller packs must print the Retail Sale Price on their labels and display all declarations required under the 2011 rules.

The department said the move strengthens consumer protection by ensuring transparent pricing information across all pack sizes. It is expected to prevent misleading or deceptive pricing on smaller packs and help consumers make better-informed purchasing decisions.

By mandating RSP on all packages, the amendment also facilitates the implementation of RSP-based GST levy on pan masala. *—PTI*

Adani Group unveils $15B airport expansion plan

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The Adani Group, headed by billionaire **Gautam Adani**, has announced plans to invest $15 billion in increasing passenger capacity at its airports to 200 million annually over the next five years.

This ambitious initiative aims to support India's burgeoning aviation sector as the company prepares to list its airport unit.

Key elements of the plan include the addition of terminals, taxiways, and a new runway at the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport, slated to open on 25 December.

Additionally, the upgrades will occur at Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Thiruvananthapuram, Lucknow, and Guwahati airports.

Approximately 70 per cent of the financing will be sourced from debt over the five-year period, with the remaining 30 per cent coming from equity, according to sources familiar with the plans.

With passenger numbers projected to more than double to 300 million annually by 2030, Adani is positioning itself as an essential player in this growth. *—PTI*

New labour codes to come into effect by April

DELHI, 3 DEC

The four labour codes, expected to usher in another wave of reforms, are likely to be fully operational from 1 April, 2026 as the Labour Ministry has begun the process of enforcing rules under the notified legislation. The Code on Wages (2019), Industrial Relations Code (2020), Code on Social Security (2020) and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (2020) were notified on 21 November.

For a law to take effect, the government must notify rules to operationalise it. Before doing so, both central and state governments must pre-publish draft rules for public feedback. Speaking at the CII IndiaEdge 2025 event, Labour and Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the draft rules for the four codes will be issued shortly.

He explained that although earlier drafts were released, they are now outdated and need to be aligned with current requirements.

A senior official said that after pre-publication, a 45-day window will be given for public comments before final notification. Responding to queries, the minister clarified that the standard working day remains eight hours, with the option of overtime, and highlighted provisions such as social security expansion, mandatory appointment letters and equal pay for equal work. *—PTI*

AMID TARIFF WAR

India's phone export to US triples to $1.47B

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

India's smartphone exports to the US more than threefold year-on-year to USD 1.47 billion in October despite global challenges, according to the government data.

The export stood at USD 0.46 billion in October last year.

Cumulatively, smartphone exports to the United States surged to USD 10.78 billion during April-October this fiscal from USD 3.60 billion in the year-ago period, the data showed.

The shipments were registering a decline on a monthly basis, but now they have rebounded.

It was USD 1.65 billion in April and USD 2.29 billion in May. But, exports fell to USD 1.99 billion in June, USD 1.52 billion in July, USD 0.96 billion in August and USD 0.88 billion in September.

PHOTO: AI

This momentum held firm even as tariff-related uncertainties threatened to weigh on demand and pricing, an official said. However, on a year-on-year basis, these exports to the US were registering positive growth. It was USD 0.66 billion in April last year, and USD 0.76 billion in May 2024, USD 0.59 billion in June last year, USD 0.49 billion in July 2024, USD 0.39 billion in August last year and USD 0.26 billion in September 2024. According to data, India's worldwide smartphone exports rose from USD 10.68 billion to USD 15.95 billion in April-October 2025, marking a 49.35 per cent expansion.

The ability to achieve positive growth despite tariff pressures in the US reflects India's strategic advantages, scale efficiencies, improved production-linked incentives, deepening vendor ecosystems, and sustained investment from global smartphone majors, the official said. *—PTI*

A GOD DEAL?

Meesho's ₹5K cr IPO subscribed 2.35 times

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The initial public offer of SoftBank-backed e-commerce firm Meesho Ltd received 2.35 times subscription on the first day of share sale on Wednesday, helped by across the board investors' participation.

The three-day IPO got bids for 65,40,18,165 shares against 27,79,38,446 shares on offer, as per NSE data.

Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) category received 3.85 times subscription while the portion meant for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) got subscribed 2.12 times. The quota for non-institutional investors fetched 1.80 times subscription.

Meesho on Tuesday said it has garnered a little over Rs 2,439 crore from anchor investors. The e-commerce firm's Rs 5,421 crore IPO concludes on December 5.

The company has fixed a price band of Rs 105-111 per share, valuing Meesho at Rs 50,096 crore (USD 5.6 billion) at the upper end.

The company's IPO has a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 4,250 crore, along with an Offer For Sale (OFS) of 10.55 crore shares valued at Rs 1,171 crore at the upper band, taking the total issue size to Rs 5,421 crore. *—PTI*

Aequs' IPO subscribed 3.42 times

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The initial share sale of Aequs Ltd, a contract manufacturing firm specialising in consumer durable goods and aerospace parts, sailed through within hours of the start of the bidding process on Wednesday and finally ended the day with 3.42 times subscription.

The company's Rs 922-crore Initial Public Offering (IPO) received bids for 14,36,44,200 shares against 4,20,26,913 shares on offer, translating into 3.42 times subscription, as per the NSE data. *—PTI*

NephroPlus IPO to open on 10 Dec

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Dialysis services provider Nephrocare Health Services Ltd is set to launch its initial public offering, comprising a fresh issue of shares worth around Rs 353 crore, on 10 December. The company's maiden public offering will conclude on 12 December, and anchor bidding will take place on 9 December, according to the Red Herring Prospectus. The IPO is a combination of fresh issue aggregating Rs 353.4 crore and an Offer For Sale of 1.12 crore shares by shareholders. *—PTI*

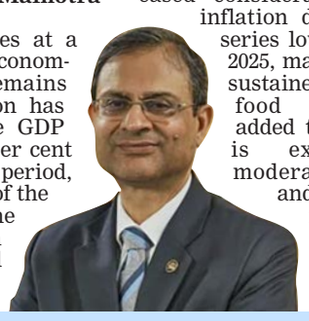
RBI's monetary policy meeting begins

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

The three-day monetary policy committee (MPC) meeting of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) begins on Wednesday in Mumbai.

The MPC will hold detailed discussions on monetary policy, taking into account the latest data on GDP growth and inflation. The policy outcome will be announced by RBI Governor **Sanjay Malhotra** on Friday at 10am.

The meeting comes at a time when India's economic performance remains strong, and inflation has fallen sharply. The GDP growth rate IS 8.2 per cent for July-September period, the second quarter of the 2025-26 fiscal. At the same time, inflation has touched a record low. According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, India's retail inflation fell sharply to 0.25 per cent in October 2025.



The report highlighted that India's economic growth remains robust, with GDP growth of 8.2 per cent in the second quarter of FY26 surpassing market expectations. On inflation, the report noted that price pressures have eased considerably as CPI inflation dropped to a series low in October 2025, mainly due to a sustained decline in food prices. It added that inflation is expected to moderate further and could even fall below it's own estimates. *—PTI*

Indian shooters hope to hit bull's eye at ISSF WC Final

PHOTO: PTI

DOHA, 3 DEC

India's top shooters, after a year sprinkled with major milestones and heaps of medals, will look to finish the season on a high at the elite ISSF World Cup Finals, which will commence here on Thursday.

The season-ending competition will see 14 of India's best, including Paris Olympics double-bronze medallist pistol shooter Manu Bhaker, world champion Samrat Rana and multiple World Cup medallist Suruchi Singh, vie for the honours in a field usually restricted to the world's top 12 shooters in the individual section in each event. In a glorious outing for the country's shooters on the big stage, India put on a record-breaking show at the World Championships, held in Cairo (pistol/rifle) and Athens (shotgun), where they won 14 medals, including three gold across Olympic and non-Olympic disciplines.

They will now look to convert that success in the World Cup Final, which not only gives winners bragging rights but also comes loaded with attractive prize money of Euro 5,000, 4,000 and 2,000 for the gold, silver and bronze medallists, respectively, in each category.

Two of India's top pistol shooters, Manu and Esha Singh, will be among the favourites for podium finishes in 10m air and 25m sports pistol after they made the top-12 on the basis of their ranking and performance in the World Cups and World Championship.

The men's 10m air pistol event will have the newly-crowned champion in Cairo recently, Karnal-born Samrat Rana, and Baghpat's Varun Tomar, who took the bronze as India made history by taking two podium spots in the showpiece event. The men's 10m air rifle event will have former world champion Rudrankksh Patil and Arjun Babuta, who finished fourth at the Paris Olympics. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

AITA extends Rohit's tenure as Davis Cup skipper

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The All India Tennis Association (AITA) on Wednesday reappointed Rohit Rajpal as captain of the Indian Davis Cup team, extending his tenure till 31 December, 2026, as the country prepares to host the Netherlands in the Qualifiers. Rajpal, who has previously led India in several Davis Cup ties, will continue at the helm for one more year, while Ashutosh Singh has been retained as the team's coach. Rajpal's reappointment ensures continuity in leadership ahead of what will be a crucial home tie as India attempts to make the Finals. He will oversee the team not only for the upcoming Qualifiers but also for all Davis Cup engagements during his renewed tenure. Delhi and Karnataka have already expressed their desire to host the tie in February.*—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

India registers success at FEI Asian Equestrian C'ship

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

India on Wednesday ended their campaign at the FEI Asian Equestrian Championship, securing a total of five medals across the Eventing and Dressage events in Pattaya, Thailand. In Eventing, Target Asian Games Group (TAGG) scheme athlete Ashish Limaye clinched an individual gold as well as a team silver alongside fellow Shashank Singh Kataria and Shashank.In Dressage, Shruti Vora remained the star of the competition for India, bagging three silvers one in the individual category, the second in Intermediate Freestyle–I, and the third in the Dressage Team event.*—PTI*

E-Sports c'ship gets flagship event status

KOHIMA, 3 DEC

The Department of Youth Resources and Sports (YRS) in the Nagaland government on Wednesday announced that the Hornbill E-Sports Championship Season 2 will be held as a flagship event of the ongoing Hornbill Festival. Addressing a press conference here, YRS director Kethosituo Sekhose said the event scheduled for December 8 and 9 at Indira Gandhi Stadium, Kohima, will feature expanded game titles, increased prize money and the highest-ever e-sports participation recorded in the state. He said it is being organised in collaboration with the E-Sports Association of Nagaland (ESAN).*—PTI*

Dani gets injured as Barcelona beats Atletico Madrid 3-1

MADRID, 3 DEC

Barcelona increased its Spanish league lead by coming from behind to beat Atletico Madrid 3-1 on Tuesday, with Dani Olmo scoring the go-ahead goal but hurting his shoulder in the process. Olmo injured his left shoulder in a fall after sending a left-footed strike into the net in the 65th minute for Barcelona's second goal at Camp Nou stadium. Atletico had opened the scoring with Baena, and Raphinha equalized for the hosts in the first half. Olmo was in visible pain after going down and couldn't celebrate the goal that left Barcelona four points ahead of Real Madrid. The Barcelona playmaker was immediately substituted and had to be assisted off the field by the club's medical staff.*—PTI*

Kohli slams 53rd ODI ton, Gaikwad falls for 105

Markram slams 110, SA beat India by 4 wickets

RAIPUR, 3 DEC

South Africa defeated India by four wickets in a high-scoring second ODI to level the three-match series 1-1 in Raipur on Wednesday. Proteas overhauled the target, scoring 362 for six in 49.2 overs, riding on a century from Aiden Markram, and fifties by Matthew Breetzke, 68, and Dewald Brevis, 54. This is the joint-highest target successfully chased down against India in the format. Australia did it back in 2019, and South Africa repeated it six years later. 102 off 93 balls, 105 off 83 balls, 110.

Virat Kohli smashed a record-extending 53rd ODI century, helping India cruise against South Africa in the second match in Raipur on Wednesday.

Kohli is the batter with the most hundreds, 53, in a single format. Sachin Tendulkar follows him with 51 Test tons.

He fell for 102 runs after finding the fielder at long-on. Earlier, Ruturaj Gaikwad scored 105, having stitched a solid 195-run partnership for the third wicket with Kohli. Reaching the landmark in just 77 deliveries. After the hundred, Gaikwad said that he was gutted to have missed out on a big knock in the series opener. He also shared how batting with Virat Kohli is very helpful. Gaikwad's hundred featured 12 fours and two sixes, helping India post a formidable total of 359-5 in 50 overs against the Proteas. Notably, he and Virat Kohli, who brought up his second successive ODI century, shared a crucial 195-run stand.

Aiden Markram *PHOTO: PTI*

India lost Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal with just 62 runs on the board, but the duo of Kohli and Gaikwad led the hosts' comeback with a stunning stand. India were invited to bat first by South Africa in this game.

Star Indian batter Virat Kohli on Wednesday moved up to No. 4 in the latest ICC rankings with a match-winning hundred against South Africa in the first ODI at Ranchi, boosting his ascent.

Kohli made his 52nd hundred in the 50-over format, a 120-ball 135 that propelled India to a 17-run win over the Proteas on Sunday.

The 37-year-old now has 751 ranking points, and trails former India skipper Rohit Sharma (783), who retained his top spot, New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell (766), and Afghanistan's Ibrahim Zadran (764).

Brief scores:
India 358/5 in 50 overs (Virat Kohli 102, Ruturaj Gaikwad 105, KL Rahul 66 not out; Marco Jansen 2/63) South Africa 362 for 6 in 49.2 overs (Aiden Markram 110, Matthew Breetzke 68, Dewald Brevis 54; Arshdeep Singh 2/36). *—PTI*

Ruturaj Gaikwad *PHOTO: PTI*

Fit-again Gill to play T20I series against SA

RAIPUR, 3 DEC

Flamboyant all-rounder Hardik Pandya and star batter Shubman Gill on Wednesday returned to the Indian T20I squad for the upcoming five-match series against South Africa after recovering from their respective injuries.

Gill, who missed a major part of the Test series and the ODIs against South Africa due to a neck injury, has been picked for the T20 games as vice-captain after recovering from his condition.

The selection committee meeting to pick the T20 squad took place here on Wednesday.

The five-match series begins on 9 December in Cuttack. The other matches are scheduled in Chandigarh (11 December), Dharamsala (14 December), Lucknow (17 December), and Ahmedabad (19 December).

Suryakumar Yadav is the regular T20I skipper for India.

India squad: Suryakumar Yadav (C), Shubman Gill (VC)*, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Jitesh Sharma (WK), Sanju Samson (WK), Jasprit Bumrah, Varun, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Washington Sundar. *—PTI*

Indian shuttlers dominate at Guwahati Masters

GUWAHATI, 3 DEC

Indian shuttlers, including Tanvi Sharma and Tharun Mannepalli, produced a dominant display at the Guwahati Masters Super 100 tournament as several home players progressed to the next round with commanding wins across the men's and women's singles draw here on Wednesday.

Besides Tanvi, other top performers included Tanya Hemanth, Tasnim Mir, Ashmita Chaliha, Anmol Kharb, Anupama Upadhyaya, Isharani Baruah and Shreya Lele in women's singles.

While in the men's singles, Meiraba Luwang Maisnam, Sanskar Saraswat, Manav Choudhary, Saneeth Dayanand, Samarveer, Aryamann Tandon, Tushar Suveer, Pranay Shettigar, Manjunath and Ginpaul Sonna all reached the pre-quarterfinals. *—PTI*

YOUNG DRIVER TEST

Kush to drive latest Formula 1 car in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI, 3 DEC

Indian racer Kush Maini will get the taste of modern Formula 1 machinery for the very first time when he takes the wheel of the current Alpine car in the Young Driver Test at Yas Marina Circuit here.

The test will take place next Tuesday, two days after the 2025 Formula 1 World Champion is decided on the same track. "Following the race weekend, Kush will take part in Tuesday's post-season Young Driver Test, following the conclusion of the Formula 2 race weekend, for his first appearance in modern Formula One machinery in an official Formula One session," read a statement from Alpine Formula 1 team.

The 25-year-old from Bengaluru has previously driven in the team's Testing Previous Cars (TPC) programme and simulator as part of his role in the Alpine Academy. He is also one of the reserve drivers at the Enstone-based outfit.

Nearing the end of his third Formula 2 season, Maini is understandably thrilled about getting in the cockpit of the latest Formula 1 car.

"I can't wait to take part in the post-season Abu Dhabi test and to have my first proper experience of the A525. The Yas Marina Circuit is one I know well from Formula 2, and it will be impressive to see the level of performance Formula One cars have around this track. *—PTI*

B'luru Blasters score first win

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Bengaluru Blasters bounced back from successive defeats with a nail-biting 4-2 Grand Rally win over Mumbai Smashers, opening their account in the Indian Pickleball League (IPBL) here on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, league leaders Chennai Super Warriors stretched their winning run to three with a 5-1 victory over Capital Warriors Gurgaon. With both Bengaluru and Mumbai chasing their first IPBL win, the day's opening match was exciting as Asia's top two players Quang Duong (Mumbai) and Phuc Huynh (Bengaluru) lit up the centre court.

Huynh struck first, repeatedly pulling Duong toward the line before firing winners into the backcourt.

But the World No. 3 responded with trademark precision, flipping the momentum and closing out a sharp 15–10 win. Huynh hit back, teaming up with teenager Arjun Singh to beat Duong and Ammol Ramchandani 15–11 in the men's doubles. *—PTI*

Mohit Sharma announces retirement from all formats

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Veteran India pacer Mohit Sharma on Wednesday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, bringing an end to a career that spanned 34 international appearances and more than a decade in the Indian Premier League.

The 37-year-old pacer, who featured in 26 ODIs and 8 T20Is, announced an emotional Instagram post, thanking the fans, teammates, and officials who shaped his journey from Haryana to the international stage.

"Today with a full heart, I announce my retirement from all forms of cricket," Sharma, who featured in four IPL finals without lifting the trophy, wrote on his Instagram page.

"From representing Haryana to wearing the India jersey and playing in the IPL, this journey has been nothing short of a blessing. *—PTI*

India's jersey for 2026 T20 WC revealed

RAIPUR, 3 DEC

The Indian team jersey for the 2026 T20 World Cup was revealed during the second ODI against South Africa here on Wednesday.

The 10th edition of the T20 World Cup will be held from 7 February to 8 March across eight venues in India and Sri Lanka.

India is placed in Group A along with arch rivals Pakistan, USA, Netherlands and Namibia. *—PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Erling Haaland scores his 100th goal

LONDON, 3 DEC

Erling Haaland scored his 100th Premier League goal on Tuesday night, and Manchester City moved to within two points of the top of the standings after surviving a stunning fightback from Fulham.

Haaland became the fastest player to reach a century of goals in the league with his 17th-minute opener in City's 5-4 win at Craven Cottage. But a night of personal glory was nearly wrecked as Fulham came back from 5-1 down and came agonizingly close to an equaliser in added time when Josh King's effort was cleared off the line.

"It's not good enough, and we all know this, and we need to improve as a team," Haaland told Sky Sports.

Haaland's goal, lashed in from close range, was his 100th in 111 games. It saw him break the record of England icon Alan Shearer, who reached that benchmark in 124 games.

Erling Haaland *PHOTO: X/@PL*

Newcastle twice blew the lead against Tottenham to draw 2-2 after Cristian Romero scored the second of his goals in the fifth minute of added time. Jack Grealish scored the only goal of the game as Everton beat Bournemouth 1-0.

City's victory saw it close the gap on first-place Arsenal, which hosts Brentford on Wednesday. But it was another game when the defensive frailties of Pep Guardiola's team were laid bare. City blew a two-goal halftime lead against Leeds on Saturday, needing a stoppage-time winner from Phil Foden to avoid dropping points. It was a similar story against Fulham as City led 3-1 at halftime, with Tijani Reijnders and Foden adding to Haaland's goal, while Emile Smith-Rowe pulled one back before the break.

Foden got his second early in the second half, and a Sander Berge own goal seemingly put City in total control with less than an hour gone.

That was until Fulham mounted a fightback. *—PTI*

Serena Williams says she is not coming back to tennis

NEW YORK, 3 DEC

Serena Williams threw cold water on the idea that she might be preparing to return to tennis, writing on social media Tuesday that she is "NOT coming back," after a spokesman for the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said the 23-time Grand Slam champion had registered with the sport's drug-testing body. That is the first step that would be required by a player seeking to come out of retirement. The 44-year-old Williams, one of the greats of the game, has not competed since bidding farewell at the 2022 U.S. Open. At the time, Williams said she didn't want to use the word "retiring" and instead declared that she was "evolving" away from tennis. It was not clear when or where or even if Williams actually will play again, and she later posted: "Omg y'all I'm NOT coming back. This wildfire is crazy." Her agent did not immediately return a request for comment. In a statement emailed to McIntyre said: "We are aware that Serena has filed the necessary paperwork with the International Tennis Integrity Agency to reenter the International Registered Testing Pool. *—PTI*